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Vol. 53

APRIL 1947

No. 116

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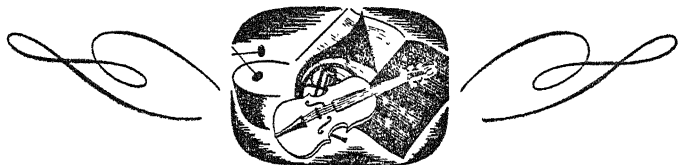
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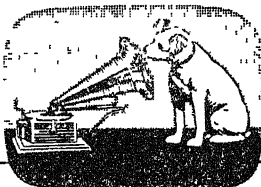
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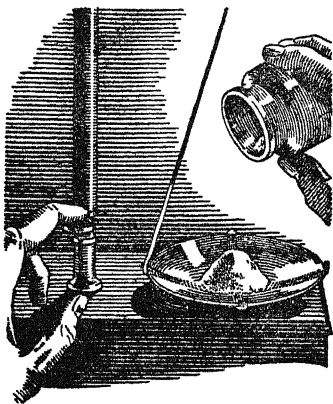
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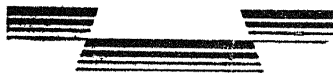
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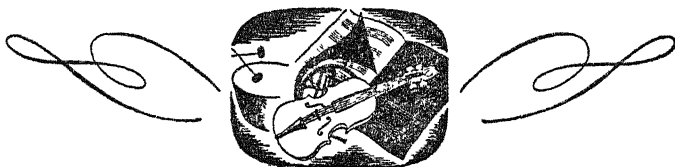
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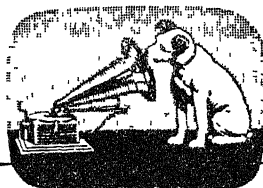
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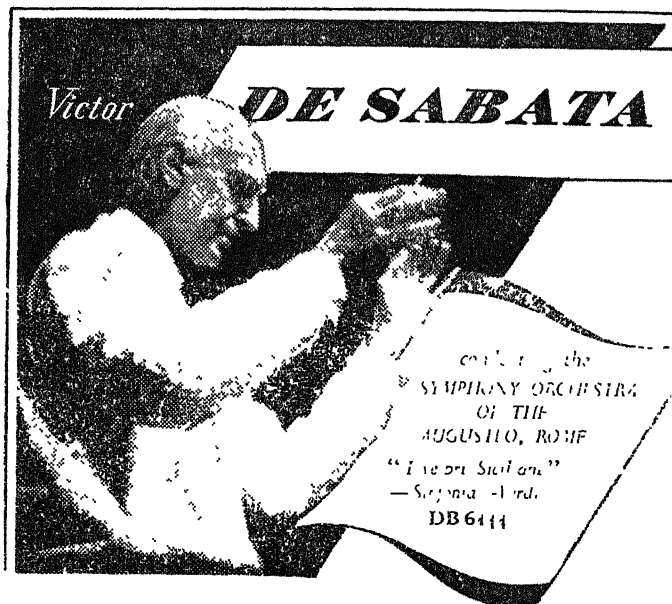
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EDITORIAL

April 1947

MAGNIFICENCE is hard to meet in totalitarian times. I urge, therefore, all in London who miss splendour and colour in the surroundings of their daily lives, to betake themselves to the Duchess theatre, off Aldwych, where Webster's *The White Devil* is currently performed. Here is English at its most majestic, in verse at its most sonorous and imagery at its most daring, even for English poetry, set in a play which not for generations does the general London public have the opportunity to see. I am glad to record that the public appears to be taking that opportunity; on my visit, despite bad weather, the theatre was full. The play is on for only three months, Mr. Helpmann, who takes the part of Flamineo, having previous commitments in ballet at the end of that time. I am aware that many of my readers will have no chance of seeing the play, but I imagine I may take it for granted that their love of English, and above all of poetry, is such that they will not object vehemently to receiving an account of what is, after all, in a country more apt to prefer a *Blithe Spirit* from *The White Devil*, a dramatic event of some importance. We have all in our time assisted at brave but brainless revivals of classics, so ill-directed or under-rehearsed that the result has been rather to prejudice those familiar with the work than to convert newcomers. 'If this is Shakespeare' (or Marlowe, or Farquahar) we have said, 'leave him alone. Let him live in our imaginations, rather than be murdered on the stage.' The present production of *The White Devil* is not of that order; it stirs the imagination; it brings out points and raises issues not clear in the reading, and this I take to be the major purpose of the performing of any play. The tragedy has been cut to fit into a running-time of two and a quarter hours. Lovers of Webster will think the cutting drastic, but will at least scarcely deny that what is left is a fast-moving, coherent performance of

mounting dramatic impetus. The play is well-set and, despite occasional fantasticalities, well-dressed. By which I mean that décor and dresses neither rebuke the eye by falling below what is expected of them nor insult the intelligence by running past that. This is not an 'elaborate' production, strangling itself in its ruffs; it is well-proportioned, lithe and designed to allow the play to go forward. All the parts are well taken. Apart from the Vittoria (Margaret Rawlings) and the Flamineo (Robert Helpmann), the Cardinal (Hugh Griffith), the Brachiano (Roderick Lovell), the Camillo (Woolfe Morris), the Marcello (Gordon Davies), are all good; the subsidiary actors do not tail off and it is no disparagement of Martita Hunt (Vittoria's mother) to say that she has seemed more at home in Tchekhov, for in her mad scene, complete with rosemary and dirge, she held an audience from whom she had first to remove any reminder of Ophelia. The outstanding merits of the actors are that they speak the verse clearly and with conviction, that they never hold back but, without ranting, go all out when required—the scene with the pistols is one of the most exciting I have ever seen on the stage—and finally, that they allow the play to speak for itself.

It is not a 'pretty' play. As an acting piece it is finer than *The Duchess of Malfi*, but Webster, unlike Shakespeare, is at no pains to integrate his characters—he would have made Desdemona a wanton and Othello all black, whilst Goneril and Regan, one feels, would have been the central figures of any *Lear* he might have written. Where he stands apart is in the detachment of his characters. Richard II. will dramatize himself, and Hamlet and Lear stand out as introspective because they are almost the only major Shakespearian characters who are. And with them, be it noted, in Shakespeare's day, introspection led to madness, feigned or actual. But the Duchess, Bosola, Vittoria, Brachiano are beyond introspection. They do not look into themselves—they have done that, and do not like what they found—they stand outside themselves, and comment both on their actions and the thoughts which prompted those actions. Flamineo comments not only on himself, but on all the characters; he is both Vice and Chorus; and the conclusion he reaches about men's thoughts is that

there is 'nothing of so infinite vexation'. He refuses to think as he dies: he is 'in the way to study a long silence'. Brachiano, too, protests at dying 'among women howling' and in *Malfi*, the Duchess would go any way, 'for heaven's sake, so it were out of your whispering.'

They all want silence. Death to them is that. To the Elizabethans, even Death was alive. Life was not enough; even the hereafter had to live; to the Jacobean, life was too much and it was infected with the corruption of death. We know why. They were at the end of an era. Not only had the Queen died and an established greatness dwindled. Men's minds had passed acceptance and were questioning. New horizons were visible—and out of reach, and the earth had opened under their feet. The atom that haunted them was of the mind. The confines of the mental world in which they had lived were destroyed, but whilst the implications were too vast to grasp, their personal life had lost its banks and so its channel.

This is not the only reason why we find Webster congenial to-day. The success of recent revivals of Shakespeare, Congreve, Jonson, Shaw are part, I think, of a widespread hunger, which shows also in the great increase in musical performances of all kinds and the popularity of poetry, read or spoken. It is the hunger for harmony—harmony of sounds, precision and order of words. Our souls need harmony, and when our bodies are battered, our eyes and ears affrighted by destruction, the soul seeks rest and revitalization in order, in form, in Art. Add to this the drabness and crudity prevailing in Parliament and the Press, over the air and in most daily exchanges—'conversation' would be too spirited a word—and it will be agreed, I hope, that such language as that now to be heard at the Duchess theatre satisfies an appetite sadly stinted of—magnificence.

TO MY SON

by GEORGE BARKER

My darkling child the stars have obeyed
In your deliverance and laid
You cold on the doorstep of a house
Where few are happy and times get worse.
I will not gild your nativity
With a desirable lie, nor pity
The birth that invests me with a second
Heart on which I had not reckoned:
No less than I do, you will drink
Comfort at cold comfort's brink;
And when the wheel of mischance grazes
You as you play I shall know pauses
Of the skipping heart. Let the day, bending
A bright hand about you, attend you
Through the fatherless nights when we
Are each of us alone at sea
Without a North Star—but may
The night seem friendlier the next day.
The best of all is not to be born,
But how can we tell this to the morning
That, as we cry out, comes over the hill
Of our midnight grief? I see you still,
An unbroken daybreak in my darkest
Heart, destined to illuminate the stark
Day of necessity in proper season.
Why were you born? I love. That is the reason.
But do not ask me why or whom—
Does it matter what prefix doom
Wears to her name? She and I
Meet at that moment when all wishes
Under a dazzle of unpropitious
But irresistible ascendancies
Clasp each other because they freeze.
I saw her face. Fate had taught her
That she was an elected daughter,

And in obedience to the pull
 Of that which knows it is beautiful
 I moved towards her in the cold
 And fell into a womb. The golden
 Undergrowth of her sex enmeshed
 The dying fugitive it refreshed
 For henceforward daily dying.
 Sucking blood a Venus, sighing,
 Nurses her prey back to life:
 He kills her with the sexual knife
 That kills him also. But all this
 Comes later, my dear son, and is
 Knowledge of a kind that seems
 Too bitter for the simple schemes
 Of a world in which the killer
 Neither hates nor loves the killed.
 Your bed is a kingdom where
 Tears pacify the dog of despair,
 And the cold sheets, getting warm,
 Protect you all night long from harm.
 My bed is made. I lie on love
 Like dynamos. The pitch and shove
 Turn generations on their way.
 We weep as we embrace and die.
 When the normal day begins
 We, rising, step out of our sins
 Not even smiling. The monsters settle
 Back into their sleeping metal.
 My dear son, you rode down on
 The spinal throes of a mastodon
 One quiet night in May. I bare
 That hour because I do not dare
 Let flesh grow over it. Your own
 Heartburst, one day, like a cyst,
 Will fester so, if you desist
 From speech. The tongue is a bird
 Where the worm, in the heart interred,
 Can be caught by no other. Let him, ringing
 Lark of the bloodiest field, bring

TO MY SON

The overworn heart relief. I write
These lines in a train on a night
You sleep away in Galway. Do not stir.
I would not have my unpleasanter
Thoughts disturb you. It is late.
The moon stares down, dispassionate
As the world stares up at her.
All things are lost in genera.
The train crawls on. The coast creeps near.
The rain has started, and the year
Is almost ended. I have been
Too long away from my domain;
Too much pursued my own will o'
The whips under a stranger pillow,
Too many wounded seas sailed over
To think that destinations cover
The running sore of separation.
I, like a train, must learn my station
And stop a while there. Let me hide
My restlessness at your bedside,
Where, my dear son, you keep
Four better guardians of your sleep.

AUSTIN CLARKE

THE POET IN THE THEATRE

VIVIAN MERCIER

Two things are necessary for poetic drama—a poet and a theatre. In the past fifty years, Ireland has learned that lesson twice—first from W. B. Yeats, then from Austin Clarke. By a theatre, I do not mean the auditorium, stage, curtains, scenery, lighting equipment, wings, scene dock, and dressing rooms with hot and cold running water—though all these things are useful in their way. I mean rather a group of actors, designers, and directors, fully competent to bring to life on the stage the kind of plays that are to be written for them—in this case, poetic plays.

For a poet to write plays before he has a company of actors trained in verse-speaking, is almost as futile as for a choreographer to conceive ballets before there is a trained company of dancers to perform them. Most of us have now some idea of how long it takes to train dancers for the Russian Ballet, in which the basic steps and the method of teaching them have been unchanged for generations. To organize a company of poetic actors who should take all the world by storm, as Diaghileff's ballet company did in the second decade of this century, would require an equally long period of basic training. More than that, since none of the existing theatre-disciplines are entirely to the point, there might have to be a long period of experiment before it was agreed what this basic training should be.

The only poetic tradition in the English-speaking theatre before Yeats was the Shakespearean. Poets were condemned to write Shakespearean plays, or abandon all hope of having their plays performed. Pseudo-Shakespearean plays by many great English poets *did* win performance, but they could not survive comparison with Shakespeare for more than ten or twenty years, and soon dropped out of the repertory.

Yeats, who had no desire to compete either with Shakespeare or with other less successful dramatic poets of the English tradition, saw another way out of the difficulty. He founded his own theatre, primarily to perform his own plays. He was exceptionally lucky, in that Irish economic and cultural conditions made this possible with the small amount of capital provided by his English backer, Miss Horniman.

I have not the space here to trace, step by step, how prose drove poetry from the Abbey Theatre. The causes were many—economic, personal, even in a sense political. While Yeats lived, he could still be sure of having his own new plays performed, and that seems to have been all he cared about. His encouragement of other poets was rarely more than half-hearted, and in the case of Austin Clarke he allowed personal antipathy to influence his artistic judgment. When Yeats died in 1939 there was no longer in Ireland a poetic theatre or a dramatic poet. So, at least, it seemed at the time.

Admittedly there *was* Austin Clarke, an Irish poet and critic who had returned from England a year or two previously. He had by then written three plays, two of which had received their first performances in Great Britain. (*None* had been staged by the Abbey.) But Clarke's reputation in his own country was as yet small—precisely *because* he had been so slighted by Yeats, and because Irish people had had only one opportunity to see a play of his performed. They had another chance in the summer after Yeats's death—but who goes to the theatre in summer?

Since the Abbey would not do his plays, and since the two companies which played at the Gate Theatre chose their programme from the world repertory—each finding room for only one play of his in ten years—Clarke finally decided to found his own company. Unlike most poets, he happens to possess a very beautiful speaking voice as well as the ability to read poetry rhythmically and intelligibly. Starting from this point, he decided first of all to train a verse-speaking choir, which might later be enlarged into a theatre company.

The first recruits were amateurs with a taste for poetry. Some had had training in acting and/or 'elocution', some had not. The fewer preconceived ideas they had, the easier they

were to train, in all probability. This group, the Dublin Verse Speaking Society, still gives weekly poetry recitals with Clarke on the radio and does the choral speaking so often required in poetic plays, while some of its members take important acting rôles as well. When necessary, professionals with the right kind of training are induced to play, design, or direct, and this enlarged group is called the Lyric Theatre Company. The verse choir, however, still acts as the necessary permanent core of the theatre which Austin Clarke has created.

Some day, perhaps, a far-sighted theatrical publisher will persuade Clarke to make a book of his theatre experiences, and the practical lessons he has deduced from them. It will be an invaluable guide to other poets and directors. As I am not a man of the theatre, I think I have said all I can usefully say about Clarke's creation of a part-time theatre-company to produce his own and others' work. It is time now to pass from the theatre to the poet—remembering always that his plays require performance to bring out their full quality.

If, unlike so many plays by poets, Clarke's perform better than they read, this is because of his intimate knowledge of stage technique. By the use of black drapes and modern stage lighting, he has restored to poetic drama the speed and fluidity of Shakespeare's theatre. A simple device like blacking-out the stage without dropping the curtain is God's gift to the poet. Turn the light off and on again, and the stage has ceased to be a room—it is the inside of a man's mind. Two more turns of the switch and it is a room again. Or the action can move from place to place in full view of the audience. Spotlight one half of the stage and leave the other in darkness. When it is time to move, black-out that side of the stage and spotlight the other half. Technically, the modern theatre has unfathomed resources, which musical comedy almost alone dares to exploit. The poet's imagination can be freer there than at any time since audiences ceased to provide stage illusion for themselves.

Clarke is by now the author of nine plays. Their names and approximate dates of composition, along with other relevant data, will be found at the end of this article. I cannot attempt

to deal fully with them all in the space at my disposal here, so I must limit myself to three objectives: first, the examination of Clarke's dramatic subject-matter in general; second, an analysis of his dramatic method as represented in two characteristic plays; third, an attempt to convey—since he is first and foremost a *poet*—something of the texture and pattern of his dramatic verse.

In Ireland it is a mere commonplace of criticism to say that Clarke's subject-matter is the medieval Catholic mind. Not being a Catholic, I do not feel obliged to stress that saving word 'medieval', and I think Clarke would agree with me. The organization of the Catholic Church *is* medieval—nobody would dispute that. That being so, the Catholic clergy are forced to accommodate themselves to medieval habits of thought, or live at odds with their environment all their days. As for the Irish Catholic laity, their particular kind of piety has survived almost unchanged from medieval times. The reasons for this are complex beyond my unravelling, but fortunately, they do not concern us here. We can be content with the fact. For that matter, *nobody* in Ireland of any religion—or of no religion at all—can avoid some contact with the medieval institution of the Church, and its accompanying modes of thought.

Therefore, when Austin Clarke writes a play, *The Flame*, about the reaction of a community of Irish nuns to a supposed miracle, and sets it in the Middle Ages, do not be misled. Another similar play of his, about a supposed miracle among a community of nuns, *Sister Eucharist*, is set in or near present-day Dublin. To point the similarity, one choral passage from the first play is repeated *verbatim* in the second.

Modern or medieval, the Catholic mind would appear at first glance to have little relevance for a twentieth-century audience which should happen to consist neither of Catholics nor—quite probably—of believers in any religion whatsoever. But, in fact, what Clarke has to say is often of supreme importance to our time. Most of his plays can be discussed in political terms, as struggles between authoritarianism and individual liberty. Shaw, in *Saint Joan*, used the Middle Ages as a background for one such struggle. This play raises the

whole problem of how to facilitate the mutation of the species without which evolution is impossible. If society is not to stand still and finally to regress, normal people must learn to make room for the deviation from the norm—genius or saint—who is to lead the way to a higher type of society.

But while Shaw discusses this whole problem at the temperature of a debating society, Clarke feels himself personally involved in it, and his plays carry a tremendous emotional charge because of this. For the greater part of his life Clarke—like Joyce before him—has been at war with his environment. I mean by 'environment' not only the Catholic Church and his Jesuit schoolmasters, but almost the whole of Irish society as at present constituted. Yeats, being a Protestant, could ignore Catholic public opinion in Ireland. Not so anyone brought up as a Catholic. Why this should be so, social psychology is still in too embryonic a stage to be able to explain. The dilemma, to escape which Joyce fled to Europe, has been repeated many times since in the lives of Irish authors with a Catholic upbringing—Clarke, Liam O'Flaherty, Seán O'Faoláin, Kate O'Brien, Frank O'Connor, all in their different degrees are victims. Ireland says to them: 'Conform or get out'—and they would prefer not to do either.

Over and over again, therefore, Clarke dramatizes the persecution by the group of the individual who will not conform, whether it be a novice nun who refuses to have her hair cut off (*The Flame*), or a King who rebels against the clergy by taking a mistress (*The Plot is Ready*). But the most insidious form of persecution is that which comes from within the individual himself. A little servant girl sees the compulsions of society as bogey-men (*The Viscount of Blarney*), and vows to be chaste after her vision of the night-hag or 'Fostermother', who carries the victims of infanticide to Limbo. More sophisticated people are haunted by conscience and the sense of guilt—devices which society has developed for its own protection, but which the individual himself is powerless to control.

Since society always defeats the individual in real life, Clarke can only attain his wish-fulfilment by supernatural intervention. The individual triumphs by miraculous means—and the medieval background makes such miracles acceptable,

at least till the play is over. But society still wins, for its representative—usually an Abbot or a Mother Superior—can supply another interpretation of the ‘miracle’, by which society’s aims are upheld and even furthered.

Hence it is that Clarke, in his plays dealing with conventual life, cares little about the vows of poverty and chastity which his monks and nuns have made. It is the third vow, that of obedience, which matters. The insistence upon obedience to one’s spiritual superiors humbles the intellect as nothing else can. As in a totalitarian state, the individualist detests, not the power assumed over his body, but that assumed over his mind.

Anybody who is at all familiar with medieval literature, knows that the Middle Ages had another, freer side. Piety and restraint can be overdone, and the Church was careful to provide safety-valves. The mystery-plays were often full of a comic relief which might seem blasphemous and obscene to devout Catholics to-day, yet were tolerated by the medieval clergy. Jokes on sacred subjects or at the expense of the clergy were far more common in the Middle Ages than they are to-day when to so many people religion means little or nothing.

Right from his very first play, *The Son of Learning*, Clarke has delighted to exploit the comic possibilities of medieval legend and belief. His funniest play is *Black Fast*, which he calls a ‘poetic farce’. Poetic drama of late years has taken itself rather too seriously, allowing little place for Shakespearian belly-laughs, but Clarke in *Black Fast* chose a broadly comic central situation. A medieval King of Ulster and his wife are at loggerheads about the date of Easter. The King, following the Irish calendar, is convinced that Lent is over and that it is lawful to eat meat again. His wife, following the Roman calendar, is still observing Lent, and not only will not eat with him, but refuses to sleep with him until the Roman Easter.

Two rival bodies of monks are appointed to argue the question, but each fails to convince the other. In the dispute they are as comically pompous as United States Senators. Suddenly there is a miracle—the King’s entire dinner is mysteriously whisked from the palace table. The upholders of the Roman calendar claim this as proof of their argument. They are confounded, however, when the dinner reappears

in the refectory of those monks who claim that Lent is over. This seems to the latter a clear invitation to eat meat lawfully, but their opponents suggest that this 'miracle' is the Devil's work. The curtain falls upon renewed squabbling.

I am now going to examine in more detail two plays, one a comedy, the other a tragedy, which show Clarke at his best and most characteristic. They are *The Son of Learning*, and *The Plot is Ready*. *The Son of Learning* makes up in high spirits for what it lacks of theatre-craft. Clarke was only a novice when he wrote it and he would probably, if he rewrote the play now, give it one act instead of three, and a smaller cast. The scene is set in the Abbey of Corc, where a King has come to be cured of a demon of gluttony which has made him desert his bride at the very altar. It is already clear that the Abbot is not making a very good job of the intended cure by prayer and fasting, when a straying scholar (or 'son of learning') joins the beggars who live at the monastery.

This son of learning, like so many of his kind in the Middle Ages, is more poet-musician than scholar, and more juggler and confidence trickster than either. He persuades the King to lend him his torc—the symbol of royal power—so that he may have the authority necessary to effect a cure. He then lords it over both Church and State, driving away the monks and tying the King to a chair to watch while he eats the royal dinner and makes love to the Queen-elect. What poet has not coveted such power at some time—as being his by right of intellect and imagination?

Finally he exorcizes the demon and disappears in a clap of thunder. The audience may believe either that the demon has carried off the scholar, or that the mumbo-jumbo they have just witnessed is his finest conjuring trick of all. In any case, the King has been cured, perhaps by fright. His golden torc has disappeared along with the *jongleur*, and may either have been melted in the flames of Hell—as the monks believe—or transformed into golden coins for the scholar's pocket at the nearest goldsmith's. The son of learning deserves this much profit, for he wins no reputation by his cure. The monks convince the King that it is *their* prayers and the fasting *they* prescribed which have cured him. The play ends with

preparations for the completion of the King's interrupted wedding.

The uncertainty as to the nature of the 'miracle' in which the poet leaves the audience at the end of *The Son of Learning* is, of course, intentional, and has since become almost the hallmark of an Austin Clarke play. At least one modern scholar, Verrall, has professed to see the same sort of ambiguity in the plays of Euripides. Aristophanes continually attacked the great tragic poet for his impiety and scepticism, but Athenian audiences as a whole took the plays of Euripides at their face value. Similarly Clarke, though himself a sceptic, can stir an audience of devout Catholics to the roots of their being with such a tragedy as *The Plot is Ready*.

The opening lines of this play explain its peculiar title. The burial-plot is ready for Muriadach Mac Erca, a sixth-century Irish King, and monks are already digging his grave, for it has been revealed to their Abbot that he will die that very night. Muriadach has deserted his lawful wife Crede and taken a mistress named Osna, so for nine days his house has been surrounded by monks praying for his repentance. The King is mortally sick, stricken down by his conscience, but still battling against it. In the second scene we see Osna watching by his sick-bed and confessing that she had been sent to him at first as a decoy to lure him into an ambush of his enemies, but fell in love with him instead.

Next we see the feverish visions of Muriadach's sleep, in which the Abbot and monks come urging him to repent. He drives them away and calls instead for Osna. He then awakes, but delirium is still upon him, and he rushes out to attack his enemies, the monks. Before he can reach them, he falls head-long into his own grave and breaks his neck. The Abbot and Crede are with him in his last moments, and say he died repentant. But Muriadach's ghost comes to the door of his house and calls for Osna. She goes out into the dazzling light of his transfigured presence and disappears. The Abbot gives *his* explanation—that Osna has been carried off to Hell by a fallen angel—but he is obviously making it up as he goes along, and it sounds far from convincing.

From the first word almost to the last, this play rushes

towards an inevitable end—the death of Muriadach. It has been my misfortune to witness a number of verse plays which—under the mistaken impression that they are imitating Greek tragedy—stumble and stutter to an end which is equally inevitable. But when *The Plot is Ready* has reached its seeming climax, Clarke springs his real climax upon an unprepared audience. All the action from Muriadach's awakening, to the end of the play, is conveyed in less than a hundred lines of staccato verse. The rapid succession of *coups de théâtre* is overwhelming in its effect.

To attain his varied ends, Clarke employs a variety of poetic means. The animals in *As The Crow Flies* speak in various lyric metres; *The Kiss* and *The Second Kiss* are entirely in rhymed couplets; *The Viscount of Blarney* is written in half-doggerel octosyllabics to accent its folklore naïveté. Clarke's basic metre in most of his plays, however, is blank verse; his line is less supple, more liturgical, than Shakespeare's. It must be spoken slowly and with care, but in any case there are few long speeches to tempt the actor to gabble. If speed is essential to the action, the poet either adopts a swifter metre, or divides one line among three or four speakers.

Clarke's blank verse has quite a wide range, none the less. At one end of the scale we have the simplicity and directness of the exchanges between Sister Eucharist and the souls in Purgatory. In order not to interrupt the run of the verse, I shall not attribute any of the speeches to a particular speaker:—

	Let the dead speak.	
Sisters of this convent,	twenty	
	thirty	
A hundred years ago.		
	Were you afraid?	
We were afraid.		
	And did you fail?	
		We failed.
Are you in pain?		
	We are in pain.	
		O they
Are joyful in their pain.		

AUSTIN CLARKE THE POET IN THE THEATRE

Yes, we
Are joyful in the pain of Purgatory.
And feel in every pain the striking love
Of God.

I was so timid in my life
I did not hear the little cough that killed me.
But I am brave now, I am brave.

I was
So happy, so contented that I never knew a pain
In all my time on earth.

My hands
Are memory, but they are burning holes
Shaped by the nails—

That pierce my hands—

That break

My feet.

Ah! I am wounded in the side.
I share the blood and water.

I am saved
By incorruption of that holy matter.
My soul is purified by flame.

I am
Halfway to Heaven in my pain.

At the other end of the scale are passages where the imagery is too thickly clotted, or the thought too involved, for the mind to follow them at first hearing. In such passages the poet's dramatic purpose is defeated unless the general trend of the passage, at least, reaches the audience. Take Crede's speech in *The Plot is Ready* when she pleads with the Abbot to end his praying blockade of Muriadach's house. The thought moves too quickly for the hearer, though not for the reader:—

Had there been nothing
In marriage but obedience, how could I
Have broken the ninth commandment, coveted
My husband? What if the knowledge we gain in blush
And downward look corrupt us, unawares,
And jealousy become our hidden lover?
Believe me I have suffered in the darkness
All, all that torment of the naked pupil,
For demons held the lashes back and I saw,

VIVIAN MERCIER

In smiling act, the last indulgence
By which the soul is lost. Why must I blame
Muriadach, if my own shame at midnight
Has sent me here before it is too late?

As a rule, however, in spite of such occasional digressions into scholasticism, Clarke's verse in his plays manages to be both good drama and good poetry. Take the lines from the same play which describe Muriadach's spirit rising from the dead. (The device of having narrators is used only for this brief episode.)

NARRATORS:

A shadowy form
Is waiting by the grave.
It turns
Impatiently.

It glimmers to the ground
Shaping itself from memory—
begins

BOTH NARRATORS:

To move more rapidly across the grass.
The spirit of Muriadach Mac Erca
Is coming to this house.

ABBOT:

Pray, pray for him!

BOTH NARRATORS:

We cannot see his face, so glorious
The heart is shaken with tears.

VOICE OF MURIADACH

(outside): Osna!

I cannot think of any living poet who could achieve such a dramatic effect with so few words. When the words are reinforced by a mutter of prayer from the monks and a darkening of the lights on-stage to stress the glow that comes from Muriadach's figure outside, I defy anyone's scalp not to prickle. Coleridge's 'willing suspension of disbelief' has been achieved. Such moments of supreme 'theatre' are possible only when the poet and his imagination have been restored to their rightful place in the theatre.

LIST OF PLAYS, WITH APPROXIMATE DATES OF
COMPOSITION

Plays marked with an asterisk have been performed by either the Dublin Verse Speaking Society, or the Lyric Theatre Company or both. These two groups have also performed plays by W. B. Yeats, Gordon Bottomley, Archibald MacLeish, T. Sturge Moore, Mary Devenport O'Neill, and George Fitzmaurice.

AUSTIN CLARKE THE POET IN THE THEATRE

* *The Son of Learning*, a Poetic Comedy in three acts (1926).

* *The Flame*, a Play in one act (1929).

Sister Eucharist, a Play in three scenes (1938).

Black Fast, a Poetic Farce in one act (1941).

* *As the Crow Flies*, a Lyric Play for the Air (1942). Broadcast several times from Radio Eireann.

* *The Kiss*, a Light Comedy in one act, freely adapted from the French of Théodore de Banville (1942).

* *The Plot is Ready*, a Play in four scenes (1943).

* *The Viscount of Blarney*, a Play for Radio or Stage in one act (1944).

* *The Second Kiss*, a Light Comedy in one act (1946).

Neither of Clarke's two groups has performed any of these plays for longer than a week at a time, and often the commitments of their professional actors have confined them to week-end performances. Only the first two plays listed have been published otherwise than in *The Dublin Magazine* and/or small limited editions. They are to be found in Clarke's *Collected Poems* (Allen and Unwin). The case for a volume of *Collected Plays* hardly needs to be put. Clarke's most recent English publishers are Messrs. Williams and Norgate.

NOW WINTER CAVES

by NESSIE DUNSMUIR

Now winter
caves my sun in a dark dress.
The destroying air
sweeps death of season into the grave
of my heart. The singing will darkly rest

and lie still there.
The words, those barbarous tides, are out.
No more
before the slow year turns about
shall my spent tongue be summoned to wear

earth's weather.
The flying cataracts of spring
sow fever.
And my fond enemies in flood-tide rising
climb with the year to bring me war.

THE MODERNITY OF BEOWULF

FRANCIS BERRY

THE provenance of our first big English poem, *Beowulf*, its date of composition, the manner of its making, are now more nearly established; its historical references identified. It was in 1787 that Thorkelin, an Icclander, interested by an inaccurate description by Wanley (in 1705) of the unique MS. of *Beowulf* as a poem dealing with wars waged by a Dane, Beowulf, against the Kings of Sweden, copied the poem and published his edition of it in 1815. The MS., which had been damaged by fire in 1735, had been in the library of the Cotton family since Elizabeth's reign. It is now in the British Museum. Since the edition of 1815, scholars of eight Germanic nations have attacked the poem with the tireless devotion of Browning's Grammarian. And now French and Italian editions with translations have been issued. An enormous bibliography has accumulated discussing the poem as language, as history, as myth, as archæology—as everything except poetry.

The fortunes of the poem have been strange. One hundred and fifty years of an ever increasing flood of exegesis has followed eight hundred years when the poem lay entirely forgotten and precariously survived in a solitary MS.

It is now almost certain that *Beowulf*, as we have it, was composed in north-east England in the last quarter of the seventh century, but that it was copied in southern England about the year 1000. This copy in southern dialect, through which relics of the north-eastern dialect occasionally protrude, is the only extant MS. Panzer's and Müllenhoff's theories that the poem was a collective product, a series of lays strung together by the folk, are now discredited. It can be asserted that the poem is the composition of one poet, who was probably a priest, who *might* have been working on the detritus of older material, lay and folk-tale.

Now although the slaying of the monsters, Grendel, and of Grendel's mother, and of the Dragon is the real substance of the poem, and although this substance may indeed be the elaboration of folk-tale, yet there is much genuine history in the poem, and many of the persons mentioned actually lived (though the hero is as yet unidentified), and further most of the historical events—whether developed as important side issues or just glanced at—took place in the sixth century.

One event in particular can be more narrowly fixed as taking place certainly between 520 and 530, and probably between 525 and 530. The scop or minstrel, in the interval between the killing of Grendel and the hero's next big venture, chants about a large scale raid launched by Beowulf's tribe, the Geats (who lived in what is now south-west Sweden), against the Friesians who dwelt by the Rhine estuary. Now Gregory of Tours and two anonymous writers in Latin corroborate this. They tell how the Geatic ships, laden with plunder, were standing off shore ready to sail. Chlochaicus, their king, watching the operation from an island in the estuary, was surprised and killed by a vigorous counter-attack of the Friesians and Franks. Chlochaicus is the same as the Hygelac of our poem. There is likewise corroborative testimony of other events in the poem. So much for the historical ingredients of the epic. Unfortunately, as J. R. R. Tolkien points out, it is the history and the linguistics that have received examination to the neglect of the monsters which are the real excuse for the poem. Exegesis has spread an opaque patina over the main story.

Neither has Beowulf been served well by its translators. The translations are either repellently archaic—such as Morris' and R. K. Gordon's—or artificial and ingenious like Gummere's. There is one pleasing exception. The late Gavin Bone's translation¹ is a triumphant recreation of the mood and ambience of the original. The occasional sacrifice of a literal rendering has been offered for a more valuable, imaginative equation. This translation is fresh, urgent, and does not interpose a barrier between reader and the original poem. It is criticism, in the truest sense, as well as translation. It brings

¹ *Beowulf in Modern Verse* by Gavin Bone. Blackwell.

out the horrifying *modernity* of this old poem. The only complaint against Bone (whose version I quote in this essay) is the omission of certain lines and passages.

Now although Mr. Bone's translation at last reveals the strange quality of *Beowulf*, the essential meaning of the poem still awaits dredging. The audiences in A.D. 680 were aware of the meaning ominously resident beneath the words and left it at that. They were at least wiser than those scholars of to-day, their descendants, who—their deep selves disengaged or actively rebutting—see but a turbid surface, a crazy tale with no intelligibility outside of the historical excursions. This unsympathetic view is represented by Ritchie Girvan when in a book, so valuable as scholarship, so negative as criticism, he asks why the poet selected a tale so inferior to many others that were available.

Nevertheless, we are grateful to the scholars who through their labours have given us a clean, nice, safe text through which the awful meaning will emerge when due—*totus et rotundus*—in possession of the top intellect as it was possessed by basic feelings more than a thousand years ago.

The epic of *Beowulf* records the process of growing up, and the state of being mature until death comes. It does not go beyond death; the survivors are just most sad when their hero dies since the poet sees back to—and from—a time with no Christian premises. The twelve chosen warriors circle the barrow of Beowulf on horseback, crying out his praises, and an old woman (who might be the hero's widow) utters her lament while the reek of the burning wood mounts up black above the 'noisy fire'. *Beowulf* greatly and profoundly carries on the dominant quality of being alive on this earth after Wordsworth's luminance has faded into 'the light of common day'. The poem falls into three great movements (as Bone contends, in opposition to the scholars who see but two divisions) and the first and second episodes are more closely related to each other than either of them to the third. Beowulf achieves three conquests and self-conquests, and yet each is a sad milestone towards insensitivity's shoals.

Grendel, the 'maere mearc stopa'—the notable march stepper—who from mere and fen stalks under the wan night to

Heorot and destroys Danes at each visit is a symbol and summary of all boding evil and fear. Beowulf, it will be remembered, lying on his bunk grips the arm of the monster and, after hard and straining struggle, breaks it off at the oxters. The mutilated Grendel retreats through mist to his home, leaving a spore of blood dabs. His great arm is fixed on the horn-gabled hall. By engaging with Grendel, Beowulf achieves in one night a mutation—an abrupt advance to a new stage of psychic orientation towards the facts of existence. He kills the capacity for dread in himself by meeting and despatching the objective equation to his dread in the person of Grendel. This conquest, this matriculation from private awe (which is yet universal since it is felt by all), can yet also be regarded, in a sense, as the first instalment of the hero's diminution of respect towards the mystery of living. Beowulf, we infer circumstantially, is about thirty years old at the time of wrenching off Grendel's arm. That is, he had reached a stage in the normal rhythm of male life when an important change, almost a climacteric, occurs to all save those regressive types who suffer from arrested adolescence to their life's end. Wordsworth, in his *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, speaking of the celestial light with which the individual was endowed at birth, and which steadily decreases with the years, says :—

At length the *man* perceives it die away
And fade into the light of common day.

Now clearly the sense of wonder at the apparent glory investing all creation is only possible when the conjoint illusion of dread—also investing, or perhaps informing all creation—is held. Beowulf, with his fourteen companions, embarks on a ship and sails to Denmark to tackle and overthrow Grendel, his illusion. The image of crossing seas as a poetic equivalent of taking an irredeemable quest is familiar in poetry, and occurs often enough in Shakespeare. The hero crosses the dividing line separating youthful innocence and adult experience. After the tussle in the night the trophy placed on the gables of Hart Hall is, in the 'light of common day', a token of a conquest that is yet a disaster in the soul of a man because it implies the recognition

of the withdrawal of the mystery of a dread that had yielded to deliberate assault and had become dissipated. When we lose fear the regard for living is reduced.

But observe, and this is an instinctive subtlety in our poet rather than the confusion for which critics have blamed him, that Grendel is not utterly destroyed at this first encounter. Rejoicing is premature. Though maimed he manages to reach his home in his mere. His complete and certain distinction, shown by severance of his head, is only secured when Beowulf, going to the enemy's home and diving to the bottom of the pool, manages to decapitate Grendel only after previously killing Grendel's mother.

The reason for this is that annihilation of dread, that is, respect for the residual dread in all things, is only partially obtained prior to a full resolution of the problem of sex. And this problem is symbolized by Grendel's mother.

The prelude to the solution of the sex problem is the ride of Beowulf and his companions along a baleful road. They follow 'routes all unknown' and 'thin upways on rock faces', 'strait paths for single file.' Sinister approaches to an arcana are as old as poetry, and parallels can be cited from Theseus' labyrinthine pioneering towards the Minotaur down to Childe Roland's travail over bleak terrain to the Dark Tower. This general tendency in poetry to make the avenue to the object of quest weird, singular, and testing is admirably represented in *Beowulf* in the passage dealing with the journey along the blood-spored trail to the haunt of the monsters. The fetid mere is ringed by 'white rocks' over which trees of the 'joyless wood' lean. The water itself is turbid with ugly splotches of gore, and the surface is disturbed and set athrob by the impulsive darts of reptiles, and

Ugly kelpies as on cape-cliffs lie
Which in the mornings undertake
Miserable cruises on the sail-way.

This is the monsters' haunt and origin. The horsed warriors on the bank halt, and bray out notes on the war-horn. The sexual nature of all this imagery is obvious. G. Wilson Knight has shown the sex connotations of the sea-snakes in *The*

Ancient Mariner, and indeed Coleridge's lone seaman has a crisis to solve comparable to the hero of the Old English epic in the episode under discussion. Further, the passage in *Kubla Khan* about the 'savage place, holy and enchanted', as analysed by Knight, has affinity with the desolate and malignant location of Grendel's Mother; albeit the latter is graver in quality, unradiated by redeeming sorcery. The poet is touching on the matrix of horror. This pool is the nadir of disastrous sadness, as well as unwholesome evil. Into this pool of horror Beowulf dives, taking with him the sword Hrunting, while his comrades sit on the bank to watch the result. Beowulf reaches the bottom ooze and then finds himself in a submarine hall in which the 'bottom wench' was waiting, lit by a strange light. The sword Hrunting fails him and in the struggle the hero falls and Grendel's mother sits on her foe after having

Whipped out
Her little knife, wide and edged with brown.

In this predicament Beowulf suddenly sees lying within reach a 'master sword' and with this he 'broke the rings of bone' in her neck. In the glimmering light of this underwater cave he gropes along and finds her son Grendel lying dead. He severs his head, after which the 'master sword' starts to 'wither and rot'; it melts away like an icicle, because of the unholy blood. Then, with the head of Grendel grasped by the hair, he dives up to the surface and regains the bank. Then, Beowulf and his Geats (the Danes mistrusting had retired) bear the head of Grendel in triumph.

This episode relates Beowulf's second conquest, which is one related to the first. The first was not palpably complete until he had ventured to the source of horror and killed Grendel's mother. In slaying her, the hero also cauterises his sex nausea, of which Grendel's mother is the objective equation. But in annihilating the horror of the business of sex, he also purges himself of an awareness of its associated beauty and mystery. He comes to destroy the sacral quality and mystery of breeding and effects a break with all the past anterior to his own life by nullifying the non-physical aspects of his own conception. And it is only by the ending of the sex

THE MODERNITY OF BOEWULF

illusion that he entirely dissipates the previous illusion embodied by Grendel. The world is now flat and drained of its wonder.

Beowulf, after receiving due rewards, sails back over the sea to his homeland of the Geats. In course of time he becomes king and rules wisely and well for a long while, in fact we are told for fifty years. Then, very old, he faces up to the destruction of the third and last major illusion—that of death symbolized by that ‘old slayer of dawn’, the dragon, which angered by a slave’s theft of a gold cup from the tumulus which it guards, ‘flies in the dark’ devastating the countryside. Beowulf, full of foreboding, undertakes to meet and solve the problem of death with special armour. He enters the barrow and grapples with the dragon. Beowulf’s subjects run away, and only the youth Wiglaf is loyal to his king, and fighting together they eventually kill the Dragon. But Beowulf is mortally wounded. Sitting on a bank, alone except for Wiglaf, he laments having no blood-heir, reviews his past achievements, and prophesies misfortune for his people. He then dies. Keats, in a sonnet, wrote:

Verse, love, and fame are intense indeed.
But death’s intenser; death is life’s high meed.

Beowulf, having adjusted himself to harsh actualities concerning life, having shed the capital illusions of fear and love, finally deprives death too of mystery and grandeur, and relegates it to a mere organic process. This completes his own threefold initiation which is also the tragedy of normal adult life on the far side of Keats’ high illusions. Or it can be read as a priest-poet’s work who, living in an age not far distant from heathenism, indicted dialectical materialism in this poem.

Scholars have remarked on the zest and hopeful positivism of the first half of the poem (this is scarcely accurate, since the work falls naturally into three rather than two waves, though certainly the second adventure not only follows the first closely in time, but is also connected with it in profounder ways) and contrast it with the sombre and dry pessimism of the second, i.e. from the time of the hero’s return to the land of the Geats. What they have not remarked upon, however, is

that the episodes relating to Grendel and Grendel's mother occur in a setting (mainly) of night and darkness, while the hero's destruction of the Dragon takes place in a high and glaring light of noonday. Since, in Shakespeare, e.g. *Macbeth*, and in so much of our later literature, evil action takes place in what seems an appropriate setting of darkness, it will appear that in *Beowulf* we have a startling instance of the crossing of symbols. Yet we should remember de Quincey's declaration in the *Opium Eater* that the great vacuous melancholies befell him in the high summer of vapourless skies. In the dreams, too, he describes the shrilly, clear light, the almost staring illumining of the monstrously evil substance of his vision. The cause of the meridional sorrow is the confrontation with the infinite which only unclouded skies permit, and oppress with. But the bright light of the Dragon-killing part of *Beowulf* is even more conditioned, indeed necessitated, by the fact that the work precisely treats of the flaking-off of half-light illusions from the growing soul, which, thus emancipated, becomes burdened with a pre-Christian actuality.

The ineluctable summary of this actuality, the bitter triumph of those who have torn the gauze veil of the pathetic fallacy and see with unhindered eyes, is the great mound of earth heaped over a 'handful of grey ashes' that once constituted a man, round which the horsemen, newly lorn, ride at speed, and cry out loud the praises and hard deeds of the hero who had found his pagan truth.

Those who read the poem remark on its peculiarly English quality, such as we find nowhere else in English poetry, save in Gray and Wordsworth, and perhaps Langland. But this Englishness of *Beowulf* is less due to its vocabulary, gravity, and slow march than to the fact that it is the fullest articulation of our national scepticism. It is the present growing mistrust against the validity of any reality outside appearances that endows our earliest long poem with a new modernity.

TWO OUTSTANDING FRENCH FILMS

ROBERT HERRING

INTO what a world does a good French film take us! No longer, on entering the cinema, need we shed intelligence, abandon standards of behaviour or shelve everything that experience and imagination have taught. French films are no longer celluloid and now seen windows, French windows, leading into an adult world, where reason is expected, emotions and ethics exist and no issues are shirked. We enter this world, of which we were once free citizens, the more eagerly now that the statements of public men, the news in the Press, and even the forces of nature seem to have given up any pretence of being related to reality any more.

I must say at once that I thought *Les Enfants du Paradis*, at the Rialto, overrated, just as I found the Curzon's *Symphonie Pastorale* more moving than I had been led to believe. This may be merely personal preference, because a mountain village will always mean more to me than the life of backstage and I must admit that as I think over *Les Enfants du Paradis* more and more virtues emerge, whilst the flaws of *Symphonie Pastorale* become clearer in retrospect. But the latter film goes deeper, and I do feel that many people allowed themselves to be impressed by the length and, as it were the breadth, of *Les Enfants du Paradis*. But these do not make up depth and when all is said and done, this film gives us nothing more than the story of the eternal triangle set behind the scenes. As if that were not enough, the main personage is Pierrot and there is a dreadful Jackie Coogan moment when a small son pipes that piece about mummy to his father's mistress.

I do not think there was any need for the film to have been so long—it runs for three hours—though I was interested, myself, till the last thirty minutes. That is because when it comes to emotion, however hackneyed the situation, French

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film-makers do pay us the compliment of assuming we are out of the nursery. The story is set in a third-rate Parisian music-hall at the end of last century and is of an actor who achieves success from the moment he loves a beautiful woman. Her love is that of the flesh and the mind, but it is not of the soul, and to Pierrot all else is incidental to the soul. He finds his in his art, whilst accepting the rest by marrying a member of the company who had always loved him. The other woman, who has run through several lovers, and finally accepted 'protection' as self-defence against her awakening soul, returns—to be beaten by the wife's unassailable patience. 'He will come back, he will always come back. You do not exist for me. If it were not you it would be some other. I have only to wait.'

Fighting with unfair weapons, I thought that—but then neither women appealed to me, not sharing the perennial French admiration for the type represented by Arletty on the one hand, and disliking dumb doglike devotion on the other. What I did like was the performance of Jean-Louis Barrault as Pierrot, which seemed to me not only miming of the highest order, but a revelation of the masculine soul as delicate as it was strong. The story evolves against a bustling background, but though it uses a large canvas, only the central characters are filled in and it surprised me that out of so many people, so few came to life. Only at the end, when Pierrot lost his mistress among a crowd of other pierrots at Carnival did I feel he was in life, not before a background, and that moment was one of symbolism, to which I shall return later.

The film made from André Gide's story had far fewer extras and small-part players, but everyone of them came to life and thus together evoked all those others, in the village, whom one did not see. This is the more remarkable in that in a sense one had eyes only for Michèle Morgan. I am in no position to judge this actress, whom I had not seen before. It may be that the part—that of a blind orphan (if not in a storm, in the snow)—is a gift to anyone with reasonable talent and looks only a little other than those of a monster. No doubt Bette Davies, Bergner, and if I may mention my own generation, Lillian Gish, would have given (almost literally) their eyes for it. Be that as it may, I have not been so moved in a cinema since I first saw the

young Garbo—and I was moved in the same way. There is a spirituality about Michèle Morgan's performance which infuses not only her own rôle, but all the others, notably her friend with the lovely name of Piety, her aunt, and—I must put on record—in the clinic where she regains her sight, a nurse who has a smile of such beauty, goodness, and fearlessness, that as it dawns, one says—as to the sun—'But this is life.'

And then, remembers what life is, what we have made of it.

This is the kind of film *Symphonie Pastorale* is. Like the hills, among which it is set, alive with the verities.

The story—to inform those whom this film may not reach—is that of the adoption by a pastor in a Swiss mountain village of a blind orphan, whom he brings up with his family. The opening scene, if we have eyes to see, has given us the potentialities, or the reverse, of his character; going to fell a fir for the church Christmas tree, he reminds his son: 'Not too big, or the children will not like those in their own homes. Moderation in all things.' Moderation can cloak a good deal, and it is the uncloaking which this film, following Gide, shows with inexorable pity. Gertrude, the girl, does not grow up *with* the pastor's family. He segregates her. Her blindness sets her apart. It is the measure of the fineness of this film that we feel how Michèle Morgan herself feels this and know, too, that the pastor did not at first mean to be selfish. 'Her need is greater than that of our own children,' he tells his wife. 'I cannot fail her.' Moderation in all things—and it is his moderation which makes him think he is 'chosen', is 'fulfilling his conscience'. But moderation means 'not giving way'—holding back—repressing. And Gertrude grows up, blooms, gives, does not hold back. 'Pastor,' she says, cooped up all day, allowed to be only with him, loving him whom she knows has a wife and therefore—poor Gertrude!—thinking it safe to ask, 'do blind people necessarily have blind children?'

I ask you to believe that at that moment one breaks down. She is so clean, this Gertrude, so real, so rare. The pastor does not break down. He says: 'Of course not,' and we realize, then, if we have not before, that he means of course Gertrude is not to be allowed to have *any* children. She must marry no one. Theirs, he really believes, is a spiritual love. Meaning, hers has

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got to be and his own is twisted with the weight he has put upon it.

Gertrude reads Braille, learns to play the church organ with his son, wants to keep the rabbit the pastor brings her, but is told: 'We must take it back, wild things are unhappy if taken out of their wildness.' She seems a bit dumb at this point, as she acquiesces, but she goes out with a small boy who naturally wants to slide, leaves her, hurts himself, has to be rescued by her. Blindly, she feels her way over the snow, over a bridge, over more snow, hoists him on her back, takes him home—to be told by him that he has left his boot (the English sub-titler was wrong to translate 'soulier' as 'shoe'); so she goes back to retrieve it.

Meanwhile, the pastor's wife, a down-to-earth woman, has broken out. After an earlier sincere outburst, 'God forgive me for not deserving to be the wife of a saint,' a passionate appeal to their own life which the pastor, because he can't have another, now regards as of small moment, this woman—as wonderful in her way as Gertrude, because as honest and because she, too, believes in love, though hers is a practical kind—this woman who has shared her husband's life and put up with her own inner loneliness to make his ministration one of ease—cries: 'Then why not send her to the city to be cured?' He answers: 'You never said that before.' With that inflexible French logic, which is always rather frightening, because it is reached by emotion but expressed only when that is spent, the wife says: 'I knew you did not wish it.'

Earthly woman meets spiritual man—or rather, woman who has reached a tough spirituality through love of that man is deflected by a coward who takes refuge in cant. And by being dishonest at that one, that great, moment he loses the chance of salvation and will never know, that we are sure, the lengths to which women will go, either in devotion or defiance. Gertrude must depend on him; as long as she does he will be cloaked from himself.

So he can submit to her going to be cured. Cured she is—and with what weariness of spirit, mingled with wonder, does she return to a world she can see! Part of that world is the pastor's son, Jacques, engaged to her friend Piety. Yes, we

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know the result. And the most we can say is, it happens so often, we would like it not to. But it does.

The operation has been engineered by Piety (who in Hollywood would be a teen-age gal but is here a gaily sensible young woman accepting responsibility). She cannot marry Jacques till Gertrude has had the chance to see him. Piety is not noble about this—she is sensible. She doesn't want anything to come between her and Jacques, least of all a ghost. She makes that quite clear.

Jacques is the pastor's son; Gertrude, as father makes clear, owes all to the pastor; Gertrude is equally clear, though she is never so vulgar as to say that she is the pastor's form of sublimation. There are scenes between father and son; between father and mother; between Gertrude and mother (who has never allowed herself to be called anything but 'aunt'). The son goes ('I know you would see the light,' says his father). Gertrude also goes—she remembers that day when the little boy slipped, lost his boot. She was blind then. Now, though it is her first day back and it should not end like this, she can find her way—seeing now, she can still be blind. She can stumble this time—she didn't before—and drown. And the pastor, snatching her from those who find her body, can cry, in effect: 'mine at last.'

But the really dead are his wife and her son, Jacques, who was to have married Gertrude, and Piety, who was to have married him. The only person not dead, with that inner death, is Gertrude. 'She didn't belong, you should never have brought her here.' And that is the message of this most beautiful French film—Gertrude was love, so 'you shouldn't have brought her here'.

I have detailed the story at some length because a synopsis would shatter acceptance. There are faults with the film. Gertrude appears to have lived for at least a decade in her village without knowing her way about much and the inhabitants seem oddly inhuman towards her. This is particularly noticeable on her return, healed. Cut-off communities are not remarkable for their courtesy, but even so there is a callousness about their attitude, which in turn affects hers, of 'so you can see now? Well, see if you like it.'

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Plenty, says Gertrude in effect, and not what I was put here to see. Once again the sobriety of Michèle Morgan's performance prevents the suicide seeming selfish. It is not even a way to save others trouble, it is a statement; and amid so much sacrifice, she knew statement was needed.

I have remarked on the unkindness, nor do I think I have suggested that *Les Enfants du Paradis* was overbrimming with love of one's fellow-beings. It was full, which is different from brimming, with the need for love to establish one's self. And in both these films, determined as the one is, and drastic as is the other, there is not only no love, though they would seem to be concerned with it, but the implication that love is a bad thing.

That is the basic quality of the post-war French films, the denial of love, and that is why I say that whereas once one knew every French song, every French scent, and all the French screen was based on one word, 'L'amour,'—now, though, like the pastor in *Symphonie Pastorale*, they don't know it, it is based on 'la mort'. In French films, now one gives up. One dies.

Well, yes—we all do. Possibly. But not because of love, or the lack of it. We die, mainly, because we have to—shall I say, change our form? But whenever we die, now or next time, it is only *one* part of us. The part that hasn't got love.

Which is a dreadful word, but means health, peace, and no limits ahead—though of necessity, banks on each side.

Good French films are adult, honest, direct, free of hoo-ey—what other words can I call in that will drive you to see them? But, though none of those taking part in them seem to know it, at the moment they denigrate love. We have to be kind to the French about this, because they are the most Puritan race in the world; no other could have kept up such an interest in sex *per se*; they have confused lust with *luxe*, made them one and the same, and given love very little chance to launch itself where it should be—between the two.

You will have noticed, if you have followed me thus far, that in both the films I have expatiated on, love comes to a bad end. You have all the fun you like, fleshly in the one case, spiritual in the other, but either way—flop! And not only that,

but you leave the other person unhappy, *as he deserves to be*, understood.

Love must not win—and, of course, it is the one thing that does! Death is worth dying for—and of course it isn't! Take your fun while you can—instead of realizing we're all too tired to do justice to fun, and must build, carefully, not for to-morrow, that slogan—I wouldn't be as self-righteous as that—but for the next, the found, not the lost, weekend. We have to hold each others' eyes, not only hands.

And looking at each other, our eyes are no longer mirrors of merely personal desires, but (I hope I use the terms right)—heliographs, signs of the sun in soul.

I think the British cinema at present has more of this than any other, badly as it may do it. And the British cinema will be the subject of my next article. For what I want to say is that lovely as are both these French films, they tag on unwittingly to such pictures of almost tangible putrescence as the revolting Cocteau, followed by the other, *Visiteurs du Soir*—that symbolism in which the normally lucid French mind had to take refuge in order to face the results of its unenforced logic.

It will not have escaped my readers that the two films I have dealt with, like many I am late in, or averse from, discussing, kow-tow, as France kow-towed, to the old *Caligari* set of death-wishes.

The old German cinema has come to be epitomized in that picture. And it is the spirit of that picture, and of *Waxworks*, *Hands of Orlac*, and the rest which, somewhere or other, one finds in modern French films; an inner death, seeking to persuade itself life is rotten so as to throw it away. This is natural post-war reaction. It would not matter, but for one thing; it tends to allegory and symbolism. The German mentality has always taken refuge in those mists, but they do not provide the right atmosphere for the clear Gallic mind. French acceptance of them shows a weariness which should be shaken off before it is too late.

(Note.— This is the first of three articles on recent French, British, and American films.—Editor.)

GOOD FRIEND

(Shakespeare Day, 23rd April, 1945)

By H. D.

Good frend for Iesvs sake forbear,
To digg the dvst enclosed heare
Blest be ye man yt spares thes stones,
And cvrst be he yt moves my bones.

23rd April, 1564.

23rd April, 1616.

PART I

THE TEMPEST

I

Come as you will, but I came home
Driven by *The Tempest*; you may come,

With banner or the heat of drum;
You may come with laughing friends,

Or tired, alone; you may come
In triumph, many kings have come

And queens and ladies with their lords,
To lay their lilies in this place,

Where others, known for wit and song,
Have left their laurel; you may come,

Remembering how your young love wept
With Montague long ago and Capulet.

II

I came home driven by *The Tempest*;
 That was after the wedding-feast;
 'Twas a sweet marriage, we are told;
 And she a *paragon . . . who is now queen,*
And the rarest that e'er came there;

We know little of *the king's fair daughter*
Claribel; her father was Alonso,
 King of Naples, her brother, Ferdinand,

And we read later, *in one voyage*
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis:

Claribel was outside all of this,
The Tempest came after they left her;
 Read for yourself, *Dramatis Personæ*.

III

Read for yourself, *Dramatis Personæ*,
 Alonso, Sebastian, Prospero,
 Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo,
 Adrian, Francisco, Caliban
 (Whom some call Pan),
 Trinculo, Stephano, Miranda,
 Ariel, Iris, Ceres, Juno;

These are the players, chiefly,
 Caliban, a savage and deformed slave,
 Ariel, an airy Spirit, Miranda,
 The magician's lovely daughter,
 The magician—ah indeed, I had forgot
 Boatswain, Mariners, Nymphs and Reapers,

And among these, are other
 Spirits attending on Prospero.

GOOD FRIEND

IV

Read through again, *Dramatis Personæ*;
She is not there at all, but Claribel,
Claribel, the birds shrill, Claribel,
Claribel echoes from this rainbow-shell,
I stooped just now to gather from the sand;

Where? From an island somewhere . . .
Some say the *Sea-Adventure* set out,
(In May, 1609, to be exact)
For the new colony, Virginia;
Some say the *Sea-Adventure* ran aground
On the Bermudas; but all on board
Were saved, built new ships
And sailed on, a year later;

It is all written in an old pamphlet,
Did he read of here there, Claribel?

VI

That was yesterday or day before yesterday;
To-day (April 23, 1945, to be exact),
We stand together; it always rains
On Shakespeare's Day, the townsfolk say,
But to-day, there is soft mist only . . .

Slowly, there are so many of us,
We pass through the churchyard gate,
And pausing wait and read old names
On the stones under our feet;
Look—there's a Lucy—O, the hunter's heart,
The hunter's stealth,
But listen to this,
He's caught at last—who?
John Shakespeare's lad—up to no good—
Sir Thomas Lucy caught him at it—
Poaching—(O feet of wind,
On, soul of fire, so Lucy caught you
stalking deer?)—poaching?

Awkwardly, tenderly,
We stand with our flowers,
Separate, self-consciously,
Shyly or in child-like
Delicate simplicity;

Each one waits patiently,
Now we are near the door;
Till sudden, wondrously,
All shyness drops away,
Awkwardness, complacency;

Ring, ring and ring again,
'*Twas a sweet marriage,*
So they say, *my beloved is mine*
And I am his; Claribel,
The chimes peel;

Claribel, the chimes say,
The king's fair daughter
Marries Tunis; O spikenard,
Myrrh and myrtle-spray,
'*Twas a sweet marriage*;

Tenderly, tenderly,
We stand with our flowers,
Our beloved is ours,
Our beloved is ours,
To-day? Yesterday?

THE SAFE COUNTRY

JOHN PUDNEY

His journey began, its irrelevance planned, its lack of purpose detailed, all fares paid, and a book of tickets in his wallet. Trebor knew exactly what he was to do, when and where he was to give lectures. What might also be required of him had been hinted, not stated. For the first time in years he was alone; in the midst of people, but always alone.

After crowded, dangerous years, it was like a dream to be in this safe land. All sorts of reflexes, precautions, habits, pushed themselves to the surface: but, in spite of them, he was fighting off sleep as if the whole place was an overheated room. The urbane trivialities, the opulent standards of living, the card-indexed culture, were seen through half-opened eyes. Some consciousness of his own oddity in the smooth pattern of the place plagued him slightly, but it soon passed.

The first-class saloon coach in which he travelled was framed with polished mahogany, upholstered in slightly worn red leather, curtained with faded puce serge. No draughts came through the double windows. The steam heat glazed the interior air so that the thin embroideries of snow upon the evergreen landscape outside had the cosy charm of old-fashioned wallpaper. Hefty, well-nourished passengers neatly folded their top-coats, slipped off goloshes and, seated, gazed at the thick newspapers, turning page after page which presented the news of the whole world to this safe country. Very soon they dozed.

Each day at his destination he was met by similar men with sober welcomes; and similar formal interest was displayed in the subject matter of his discourse in which he described the sufferings and triumphs of his own people. To these safe people his words formed an interesting tale tinged a little by romance, an entertainment for a winter evening. There were some among them, to be sure, who were curious about suffering, some who had theories about how it could be overcome. There were

many more who wished only to hear Trebor speak of his impressions of their country, the excellencies of the food to his unaccustomed palate, the astonishing progress of social services, and indeed the perfection of almost everything which a man can praise or bring to notice in order that it may be praised.

He praised them all because it was his duty, answered their questions about suffering, and enjoyed a melancholy pleasure in warning them that not even a safe land with so many good intentions is safe for ever. He used his eyes meanwhile. His wits pointed out to him the many fears that threaded this docile people, the many meannesses which propped up their placid generosity, the many reports to cunning which fortified their well-known generosity. Sometimes he felt shabby and sick because of this. Sometimes he lapsed from his duty and got drunk in more or less congenial company, and in private in accordance with custom in that land.

After such an evening, he lay back half asleep in the train taking him to the next place. In the saloon compartment there were two other passengers, strangers to each other, pre-occupied with newspapers and with keeping in check the heavy meals which slopped inside them, to and fro, with the motion of the train. He himself read a newspaper which had reached him a week old, in his own language, thus revealing the foreigner that he was. One of the business men had glanced through such a newspaper too, revealing in his turn that he knew that language, but never speaking a word of it or smiling or showing recognition. The other man whistled abstractedly a tune which soon got on Trebor's nerves, for it was so familiar yet so uncharacteristic of any one country that you could never put a name to it.

The inspector came in, and each of them handed over a book of tickets. The inspector was cat-like. He took his time over the tickets of the business men. His breathing and the whistler's tune wove an obligato over the rhythm of the train. Then came a torrent of words about Trebor's tickets.

'I'm sorry, I don't understand you,' said Trebor, speaking his own language. Nevertheless the inspector spoke at great length, indignantly waving the tickets about, and carrying

them away under the light in the middle of the compartment for scrutiny. Trebor, embarrassed, a little irritated, stood up and spoke in the three languages which are most commonly known. With all the obstinacy for which the folk of that safe country are renowned, the inspector repeated himself, speaking louder and losing his formal manners as if such a shabby first-class passenger had actually intruded upon his peace of mind.

It was a silly scene repeated over and over again with the inspector backing toward the door of the saloon still clutching the ticket as if to get help: and the whistler rising to look on and the other passenger listening amusedly, standing by the window. To him at last Trebor said: 'Surely, sir, as I saw you were reading a newspaper in my language, you would be willing to tell me what this fellow is trying to say in yours?'

'Of course. If you wish it I shall be very pleased to.'

'You can see what a state I'm in,' Trebor continued, outraged by the code of manners which shut out the natural courtesies. The passenger called upon the inspector to come in, and in a few sentences pacified him. The official bowed formally and retired. The whistler ceased his tune, breaking off in the middle of a note and reaching for his goloshes.

'I am much obliged to you, sir,' said Trebor. 'Was there something wrong with my tickets?'

'Nothing wrong. Oh no. It is simply a custom to ask certain questions of passengers travelling to garrison towns such as Lode. A precaution, you know. Most of our employees on the State railways are good linguists. This one was exceptional. Don't you find our railways are very efficiently run?' He waited for the inevitable compliment before putting on his goloshes.

'Very well run.'

'We think so too.' The train pulled up at a neat white town on the end of a frozen lake. The two business men got out; and a number of officers, evidently going to the garrison town of Lode which was the terminus, got in. They talked together in clipped friendly voices as they stripped off their top coats and revealed carefully tended tunics. The train slid away from

the lake. Trebor settled himself again and reached up for the brief case which contained his notes and papers. It flopped open on his knee. It was empty.

He jumped up and searched. The officers stopped talking, watching him. A young lieutenant seemed to understand his distress. His eyes were warm and lively and he took it upon himself to ask in Trebor's language: 'What is it you are looking for?' He spoke precisely, with obvious enjoyment in the use of that tongue.

'Why, all the things out of my brief case.'

'But that is impossible,' said an elderly major. 'You surely could not lose the contents and still have the case.'

'That is what I have lost, my dear sir.'

'Nonsense. That would suggest thieving; and upon our State railways in this country such a thing would be impossible. We are proud of our State railways: and I hope you find them comfortable.'

'Of course.' Trebor, even in his anxiety, responded dutifully.

'Perhaps you remember taking your papers out?' the young man suggested, kindly, interestedly. He was a charming person this, not much younger than Trebor himself, though for Trebor life had been so much harder that he felt himself senior by many years.

'No,' said Trebor. 'I have not consulted my papers on this train. Just now I had an argument with the inspector, a misunderstanding really, about my ticket. Otherwise I have not moved . . .' As he said it his mind leapt accusatively toward the two passengers, the strangers to each other. 'There were two travellers here who have got out . . .'

'You are travelling to Lode?' the major interrupted, parrying the very accusation in his mind.

'Yes, I am,' Trebor said. 'I wonder if one of you gentlemen would mention to the inspector that I—about my loss. I do not myself have the honour of speaking your language.'

The young lieutenant jumped to his feet and presented himself. 'My name is Nitram.'

'Our language,' the Major said smoothly, 'is not widely known as we are a small country, but it is very expressive.'

Our officials, however, are conversant with two or three of the languages most generally in use. . . .’

‘This inspector is not. He cannot understand a word I say in *any* language.’ Trebor did not mean to sound argumentative, but his temper had long been frayed by the smooth complacencies of the safe land and now a sense of danger in his loss sharpened his tongue. The train rolled through the evergreen country embroidered with snow where nothing had ever happened. The compartment was warm, clean, sealed off from time, space, free movement. His mind, suddenly overwrought, checked over the papers he had lost. There was nothing secret. There was his journal of impressions. There were notes for forthcoming lectures, embarrassing rather than confidential, as they revealed his method of explaining the stresses of his own country. There were all sorts of odds and ends, people’s addresses in other countries, but nothing to indicate that he was on the lookout for Taurus, for imprints of that sign which once had blotted out the sun from his own and many other countries and from which the safe country had of course been safe.

So with the sense of danger on him he turned from the major to the young Lieutenant Nitram in whose eyes there was such life and ease and said. ‘Please speak to the inspector and report my loss when he comes round anyway. . . .’

‘You are not suggesting, I hope, that your fellow-passengers . . .’ said the major.

‘I did not know them and I can hardly describe them. But one never knows.’ Trebor tried to assemble every detail of them in his mind. Suddenly the one who had whistled became focused vividly because of the very same whistle in his ear. Trebor started. It was the Major now who whistled that same tune without beginning or end; and the doors slid open and the inspector bowed to the military. He listened attentively when Nitram spoke of the loss, but shook his head.

‘The inspector knows nothing,’ Nitram said with genuine concern.

‘How could he know anything!’ said the Major. ‘He is not accustomed to such happenings. None of us is. Don’t you find us singularly free from anxiety over trifles, don’t you find us

well organized on the whole?' he asked Trebor with a return of good humour.

'Of course I do,' said Trebor. As he said it, he caught the eye of young Nitram, who winked.

'You, sir, are the gentleman who is to lecture to us at Lode?'

Nitram said, 'I think I saw your picture in one of the national newspapers.' He pulled out his notebook. 'I should be honoured to have your signature. I am coming to your lecture, of course. Many of us are coming.'

Trebor signed his book, a little warmed within himself by the display of enthusiasm. He opened his own notebook and said: 'Here, you must sign for me too and write your telephone number so that I may ring you from my hotel and invite you to dinner before the lecture.'

He was wearied with dining alone or in official company. He watched Nitram scrawl his name and the whistled tune played on his nerves. Here was something at last, surely, something justifying suspicion. Perhaps one might learn from this young Nitram . . . perhaps. . .

Nitram bowed his acceptance gracefully: and Trebor, preoccupied with suspicion, watched the sad evergreen countryside, embroidered with snow. Somewhere hidden might be Taurus, the resistance movement of the mind, the discipline of the spirit. Somewhere might be those men, cunning, defeating death, imperilling not the safe country but Trebor's country for which he had fought during these long years which had made him old and separated him from his happiness.

Dinner that evening with Nitram was lively, for Nitram spoke of the world and of events outside his own country. He had gusto and called for good wine and raised his voice to reject some of the rich dishes and order better ones. With all his spirit and his native discretion, he failed to conceal his admiration of Trebor's country, though he spoke casually of the struggle, even implying slight mockery of the safety of his own land.

'To-night,' he said suddenly, 'I have done myself the honour of arranging for you to have supper with us at a little party after your lecture, when the Commandant will have retired. You will forget your official mission, I hope, and even

the loss of your papers and we'll entertain you, I promise you.'

The lecture took place and Trebor found himself looking forward to supper with Nitram, whom he saw in the hall, eager and enthusiastic amid the native constraint of that audience. The young officers, when the Commandant had retired, were certainly entertaining. Everybody drank plenty: there were regimental songs: then inevitably came the suggestion that Trebor should be initiated into the feminine company of Lode. Trebor, arm-in-arm with Nitram and Statal, the only other civilian there, was escorted into the Blue Boar: but, alas, the dregs of the garrison women there assembled with tired eyes and loud mouths greedy for champagne, soon damped them all. It was then that Statal said: 'That settles it, you all come on to my little farm.'

The 'little farm' had cropped up in conversation time and time again. Because of his habit of inconsequential buffoonery, Statal enjoyed a slightly condescending popularity among the young officers. He in turn treated his companions with cynical indulgence. 'They are, after all, the only possible local company in a garrison town,' he said in an aside to Trebor. 'In a dozen other places which are more amusing I would keep a dozen times more amusing company. Do you remember the Grand Hotel at . . .?' Such was Statal's refrain: and the burden of his song always was that they all should visit his little farm.

It was a motor ride through the forest: and they went singing in crowded cars which crunched the newly fallen snow. They arrived before a portico tricked out garishly in light. The phrase 'little farm' was a joke indeed. The Renaissance panelling of Statal's dining room was gilded with many candles. The company roared and frolicked through half a dozen reception rooms variously rich, appointed with grace and wit in accord with period but omitting no garnishing of modern comfort.

Only for Trebor, the warmth, the company, and the drink so weakened him that reality was glazed. Nitram laughed merrily. 'You say it was your last lecture before you go back to the Capital, and I consider myself all the more lucky not to have missed it. Are you satisfied with *all* you have done?'

Trebor struggled with reality, with caution, and with a second sight which picked out the word 'all'. Nitram meant something in his emphasis. He was probing with his words and his look, deeper than the hectic façade of that social evening.

'You must see upstairs,' said Statal, interrupting them. He was overdoing his duties as host without doubt. He was beside himself with happiness at their open wonder and astonishment as they explored the spacious and tasteful voluptuousness of the 'little farm'. Possibly these suites of rooms had been kept for exhibition at such moments as this. 'You don't often have company?' Trebor said, as they walked up the wide stairs. 'I entertain from time to time.' Statal answered with pride. 'But rarely local people. Rarely even the officers of the garrison, for my connection with them is a new one. But now,' he added, linking arms with them, inebriated perhaps with his own good drink, perhaps with pride, 'this will amaze you.'

They were amazed. The salons below had been sumptuous, but the bed chambers outdid them in their appointments altogether. Each seemed to be a principal bedroom, each contained an immense bed. Statal had just launched out into a description of what fun it all was when a servant hurried toward him.

'Excuse me if I leave you for a few minutes,' Statal said. 'Look at the other rooms by all means, you won't find anybody in bed, I assure you.'

'What were you asking downstairs, when we were interrupted, Nitram? What did you mean exactly?' Nitram laughed and flung himself down on the huge white satin bed in the room they had just entered. He said: 'You gave me an impression of anxiety, of a mission only partly fulfilled. It does not do for me to talk even in private, you understand. But I could guess your thoughts in a country like this and I wanted you to know that there are people like me concealed in every walk of life in this country, people of goodwill to whom the struggle meant . . .' He yawned in spite of himself: and his yawn, curiously enough, did not detract from his sincerity.

The diffusion of light which seemed to produce a glow even beneath his eyelids, the soft carpeting which almost sucked him

down to rest, and all the giddiness of drink and exhaustion in the dainty panelled room, was cloying Trebor, who was more accustomed to harder ways. He walked idly across the bed-chamber in order to keep awake. He leant against a massive inlaid bureau. Who would ever need to think or to write in such a room. . . .

Somebody was passing down the passage with muted footsteps, Nitram on the bed sighed and raised himself on one elbow. There was the distant clatter of the party down below: and then, distinctly, came the sound, whistled through clenched teeth, of that tune without beginning or end, so familiar, yet so uncharacteristic of any one country. Nitram recognized it, and smiled sleepily, nodding and making a wry face. 'You understand?' he murmured. 'It is everywhere.'

Trebor started. That comment was so revealing and so unexpected. As he heaved himself clumsily upright the bureau slid open, and he turned to close it.

There, neatly arranged within, were his own papers, the contents of his brief case. 'You'd better tell me what you know, Nitram, I trust you. Tell me now while we're alone.' He said over his shoulder, his hand stealing down to finger his papers, count them, fold them, and lift them. Nitram's sleepy voice was replying slowly. 'I said it is everywhere. I can't say much more than that now. But I think I can help you in the long run. Perhaps I can tell you something vital about Taurus, but not indoors. On the way home when . . .' Abruptly his voice ceased and Trebor, leaning over the open bureau, made much play of lighting a cigarette. 'Yes?' he said, 'Go on. We'll arrange to go home together shall we?' He flicked the papers into his inner pocket: and turned. Nitram was truly asleep. No wonder in the bright soporific softness of that room. Trebor's own senses were fighting against the muted sleepy silence: and his hot clumsy prickliness of sweat was a presentiment of danger. 'Let's get back downstairs, Nitram. Come on.' He closed the bureau with a bang and strode over to the bed. He caught Nitram's right hand which lay gracefully beneath his elaborate uniform cuff. 'Come on, man. No good staying there.' He forced a laugh and pulled. Nitram slid toward him, leaving a wet red smear. The whole of the back of his pale uniform tunic

was dark and sodden. His mouth sagged wide open in a lifeless gasp and he slid slowly into a heap, soiling the carpet.

Trebor stood up, turned to the door, and opened his mouth, but his parched voice made no sound in the vitiated air.

As he turned back, he looked at the crumpled, wet heap of Nitram at his feet. The panelling of the bedchamber swung giddily round him. It was difficult to focus. Nevertheless, as he focused upon the smear on the satin bedspread and upon the dead man, he saw that two of the panels moved. He must get Nitram's friends. He made for the door, trying to remember any of their names. Upon the threshold, a gentle arm fell on his shoulder. Statal with an intoxicated laugh was saying: 'Well, old boy, you haven't found anybody in the beds, I bet. Though we pride ourselves that it is rather a bachelor's dream. . . .'

'Get inside there, Statal, and do what you can. I am going to fetch his friends up.'

Trebor swung round and eased Statal through the doors. It was a reflex action quicker than thought: a lesson well learned during the long years of the struggle.

Statal laughed, a brittle high-pitched laugh, but in a second Trebor had snatched out the key, swung the doors together and locked them from the outside.

Heavily, resolutely, he ran down the corridor to the head of the staircase. He could hear the party going on as he looked over the balustrade and paused: and in the darkness of the gallery opposite him he could hear somebody whistling that tune without beginning or end.

Bursting in among the mirrors and gilt of the main salon, he realized how distraught and over-dramatic must be his appearance to people living in that safe country. He shouted over the noise, unable to pick out exactly those whom he knew to be especial friends of Nitram. Several of the younger officers, a little riotous with drink, so far forgot themselves as to roar with laughter at his outburst and to point. Very soon, however, there was silence and he stated urgently and simply in the three languages most generally known that Nitram was lying dead, covered with blood, in the bedchamber upstairs and that he had not liked the look of Statal and that he had

locked him in, and that they must all pull themselves together and come up and do what they could. His left hand went into his inner pocket and touched his papers and his conviction of danger was suddenly very potent. The people of that safe country, even those who wore uniform, were unaccustomed to violent action and, realizing this, he felt himself to be in command, but always at the back of his mind was the consciousness of his mission, seeking out those last dangerous potencies of Taurus which might be lingering here in refuge.

So he led them up the wide creaking stairs and, with his instinct for command and position, he waited until they were gathered round before he unlocked the bedchamber doors. He selected two hefty fellows and said: 'We three will go in,' and then he boldly flung the doors inward. The soft diffusion of light fell upon the great bed, the great bureau, and the pale yielding carpet. No red smear violated the satin bedspread, nor was there any sign of Nitram crumpled and sodden upon the floor. From behind, somebody pushed through the men and came into the room, gently throwing one arm round Trebor's shoulder. 'What on earth are you up to, my dear chap? Is this some game of hide-and-seek?' Statal strolled across and sat down on the bed. 'What are we all playing at? Can't I join in?' he said, addressing the group.

Trebor said: 'Where is Nitram?' pointing to the spot where blood had soaked from Nitram's body into the pale carpet.

'Nitram? I saw him off about ten minutes ago when he received an urgent 'phone call. I arranged for my own man to run him back to the barracks in the two-seater. He said something about having been posted to another garrison. He was so upset he asked me not to say anything about it.'

One by one, incredulously, humorously, resentfully, the astonished group round the door told how Trebor had rushed into the salon, shouting about a tragedy upstairs and Nitram lying in a pool of blood.

Statal stood up at last and came boldly over, linking Trebor upon his arm. 'It is a great compliment,' he said, 'to the wine of my country when a guest of this house can delight us with such a macabre and realistic hallucination. Three cheers for

our distinguished stranger from overseas.' A nightmare swell of laughter overwhelmed Trebor and he could see their faces bobbing like corks in the bright light. He suffered himself to be led downstairs in mock triumph. He accepted Statal's offer, without even the energy to be wary, of a limousine to take him to his hotel. All the way, through the grey, haggard night of the forest and the snow, he was pursued by their laughter, harsher than any laughter that he had known in the long struggle outside this safe country.

He locked the door of his room in the hotel and sat down at the writing desk to compose a telegram tactfully worded to indicate that he had at last made a discovery. As he unbuttoned his jacket, however, he found that his inner pocket was empty. The excitement of Nitram's death and disappearance, the frustration of that chorus of hefty laughter which followed it, had put the papers out of his mind. He had been unwary, and they had been taken again. Wearily, with automatic military sense of positions, he began to push his bed into a corner out of line of the window: then, utterly exhausted, he fell forward and slept.

The chambermaid smiled in the morning as she put down his coffee, stepping over his shoes. The fact that the distinguished lecturer had made a night of it and lay fully clothed on a bed in his disarranged room was swiftly whispered round the hotel. There was a good deal of curiosity about it for the people of that safe country loved to read of riotous things or of orgies which took place behind closed doors. Statal's chauffeur gave them pleasure by smiling knowingly and shaking his head when he arrived and asked to be permitted to carry a small package up to the 'poor gentleman' in his room.

To Trebor he bowed and said: 'These papers, sir, were found against a bureau in the bedchamber which you visited last night. Mr. Statal thought that you might need them urgently. Mr. Statal has also asked me to inquire about your health and to convey to you the message that any slight disturbance last night at his estate is a matter which is entirely overlooked.' Statal's chauffeur bowed profoundly. 'Little incidents such as these, if I may be so bold, sir, occur from

time to time in houses of the gentry in this country. We always see to it that they are overlooked.' Trebor held the papers in his hand. Returning to his full consciousness, he groped dimly toward his own nature. There was most of the day to be spent in Lode before he could take a train on to the Capital. He could still write a discreet telegram. He went across to the writing table and wrote briefly and with discretion such a message as he knew would be fully understood by people of his own nation. Then he told himself that the sensible thing to do would be to telephone to the barracks and ask for Nitram, however curious and even dangerous such a request might seem to be on the part of a foreigner. He lay on his bed and spoke to the barracks in the three languages most generally understood. He was informed courteously in his own language that Nitram had been posted and had left his good wishes, when he departed at dawn, to the distinguished foreigner who had honoured him at dinner. Drowsily he put down the telephone.

He awoke some hours later, shivery, dejected. He had slept too long. He could see snow falling in a despairing afternoon light. He took up the telephone again and inquired if there had been any reply to his telegram to the Capital. He was listening to the hall porter explaining that, owing to the unusual snowfall, all lines were down between the city of Lode and the Capital, when there was a knock on the door and Statal was shown in.

'I come to offer my good wishes to you on your departure. If our evening together turned out to be a little boisterous, as I fear it may have done, I tender my apologies. I trust that my servant brought belongings of yours which we found on the floor. I very much hope that one summer in the not very distant future you will honour us by another visit. Meanwhile I have brought my motor car as it is almost impossible to get taxis on days like this when there has been a very heavy snowfall.'

There was just time to dress, pack, and catch the only train to the Capital. Trebor felt no sense of danger now, but only anxiety to escape from Lode, to disentangle his mind from the uncertainty and duplicity which threatened him at every turn.

Statal had waited politely downstairs in the foyer. He handed Trebor the three local newspapers containing reports of his lectures. He smiled and said: 'You have made a very good impression here, my friend.'

In the car Trebor realized that he had been holding his breath. Reality was slipping away from him. When the railway station came into view, he blurted out: 'How long have you been implicated with the Taurus people, Statal?' The question was an unconscious, tactical surprise: it was a shock even to himself. It failed. Statal tapped him on the knee in the friendliest way. 'I am disappointed if you are one of those people who believe that this country of ours, so traditionally peace-loving and progressive, would implicate itself in Taurus. As for myself . . . well you have seen for yourself how I live . . . perhaps I am rather more sybaritic than is usual in this country, but, there, I am always discreet. By the way, I must ask you before you go, what did you really imagine you saw in my house last night?'

'Every sign of Taurus. Death, treachery, all the evil which, God knows, I have learnt to recognize. That is what I saw in your house, Statal.' There was silence: then the chauffeur opened the door and the stationmaster bowed.

'I can hear the train.' Statal said with a yawn. 'Our trains, as I am sure you have noticed, run exactly to time. We are a little proud of them, in fact.' Statal sealed off the ugly words as if he had never heard them. Already Trebor was doubting if he himself really had said what he had just said.

On the long journey to the Capital he struggled against sleep. The steam heat glazed the interior air so that the embroideries of snow, heavier now, upon that evergreen landscape, looked cosy and remote. Every now and then he went through the papers in his brief case. Who had read them? Suppose he himself, overwrought by the long struggle of his own land and overwhelmed by the soft and ample abundance of this safe country, suppose he had suffered from hallucination? Suppose he had allowed his inmost thought to dwell too much upon Taurus? The sight of Nitram crumpled at his feet already had the shrill substance of an unresolved dream. What evidence was he bringing back with him? What could he offer

his own people but a sealed-off nightmare, a fantastical broth of weariness and nerves?

So he tortured himself into remaining silent both in the Capital and in his own country when he returned and made various reports.

During that winter of his return, however, postcards arrived from various garrison towns for him signed by Nitram: and he had no difficulty in deciding that the signature they bore was not that which Nitram, laughing and eager, had entered in his notebook. But when at last he reported his experience at Lode, and produced the signatures as exhibits, even his own people laughed and said that nobody could blame him for taking a little pleasure in the wine of that safe country. There had been whispers, it seemed, reaching the Capital and thence even to his own country, about his behaviour at Lode: but everyone was agreed that the slight outburst had been quite forgivable after all he had been through. After a month or two the postcards stopped.

SUNLIGHT ON THE CAMP

VALENTINE ACKLAND

IT was daylight in the camp that housed more than a thousand people. Lydia Lydoskya walked across to Maria's hut and rapped sharply at the door. There was a scuffle inside and voices shouted inquiringly but Lydia did not answer. After a pause the door was opened and when they saw who waited outside several of the women called to Maria. In the biting wind, with snow underfoot, Lydia stood silently until she came out.

'Good morning,' said Lydia, then: 'Come as far as the wire before breakfast, will you?' Maria nodded and closed the hut door quietly. Together they walked to the edge of the compound.

'Did you sleep well?' asked Maria politely.

'No. Did you?'

'Not very well. Francesca cries in her sleep, you know; it is difficult not to cry oneself, hearing her.'

Lydia glanced at Maria and saw that indeed her eyes were swollen and red.

'I never wish to cry now. It is too late for that,' she remarked stiffly.

They had reached the barbed wire and stood close to it, looking across the ugly land laced with snow, over which the wind blew with a cruel, regular force. It made the stiff wire tremble a little and loose pieces of metal here and there jangled infernally, with an ugly, blinded sound. Maria put out her hand, purple with cold, and held one of the strands of wire.

'It seems to throb. It's the force of the wind, I suppose.'

'It has been the same for years,' said Lydia, 'I can hardly remember a still day here, although it must sometimes have been summer.'

'We haven't been here in summer yet,' said Maria.

'All camps are alike,' replied Lydia, 'I have been in so many. The wind always blows and there is never any sun.'

As if it had been arranged beforehand, the sun came out as she spoke her words and after a moment or so the light and warmth had soaked through their rags and they turned involuntarily towards each other.

'Here it is!' exclaimed Maria joyfully.

'How bright your hair is,' said Lydia, gazing at her blonde head, 'But the sun shows me up for what I am.' Indeed, her lank black hair looked starveling in the light.

They both turned now towards the Camp and saw long ranks of huts standing boldly in the new sunlight, roofs shining and doors swinging open; women emerged to stand on the thin snow, scratching and smiling, chattering together. Some of them were still huddled up, with shawls around their heads, and others stood about with heads uncovered, even without coats on, forgetful of the unrelenting wind. A few children crept out too, and leaned against their mothers or trampled solemnly on the snow, stamping with their feet, kicking it into the air in a fine powder.

'It must be time for food,' remarked Maria.

'If there is anything to eat. There is always less, every meal there is less. How much longer can we endure, Maria?'

'I don't know how long it has been since the Liberation,' Maria said without irony.

'Almost two years. I feel I am nearly lost now, Maria. Every day there is less left of what I knew; I scarcely remember anything now except Camps. And yet I had parents once, a home, my own mother who really did love me. I try to remember that sometimes but I suppose I dare not. So many years since then and I do not even remember the years separately, nor the people. I am not sure now who lived and who I saw die.'

'Why need you remember?'

Lydia scowled at her, 'I am not yet thirty. When I was twenty I thought it was certain I would live my life well.'

'Not remembering is not living life badly,' said Maria, 'and when we get out—'

Lydia turned back to the wire, clasping it with her thin hands; Maria watched, with reddened, heavy eyes.

'We shall never get out, except perhaps to go to another

Camp. We shall never get out. Do you remember when you first came, Maria? You came in through the door and the guard who brought you shouted to us, "Here's another!" and then asked you, "What have you done to get here, eh?" and you said nothing, just stood there. Then he yelled at you, yelled like a fiend, and you answered very timidly, "I am a traitor," and then he laughed. He sounded quite good-humoured. He was just going out when he suddenly stopped again and called you, "Come here! Turn round!" You didn't understand but stood looking at him, and he got quite pale and bawled at you, "Turn round!" and you did. Then he kicked you and you stumbled forward. He said, "That's from me to you, then!" and went away. Else comforted you. Do you remember Else? She was a traitor, if you like!

Maria did not move but continued to stare, sometimes at Lydia and sometimes at the sun on the clusters of women at the doors of their huts.

'Why do you remind me of that? Almost every day you remind me of it.'

'Because I don't want you to forget me and that was the first time we met. You were the only person I've managed to *see* in all these years. I am always afraid now, perpetually afraid you will forget me, Maria.'

'Not much chance of it,' said Maria, still watching the sun on the huts, 'I see you every day. I always shall. We shall never get out now; I know it just as well as you do. The Nazis are beaten; the war is over; we have been liberated. Everything has happened as we prayed it might. And we are still here and we have no country now, except huts and barbed wire. I shall always see you, Lydia.'

'Yes, we shall never get out,' answered Lydia, with curious satisfaction in her voice, 'But still I am afraid, because one day you will die and then you will forget me.'

Maria laughed suddenly, a jovial, energetic laugh, 'You're becoming morbid now! Come on, perhaps there is some breakfast to-day. Look, all the women have gone; there are only a few kids left—'

'The sun has gone in again,' said Lydia, taking her arm, 'Come along, then.'

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

WOODSTOCK: A MORAL HISTORY. Edited by A. P. ROSSITER. Chatto and Windus. 15s.

MR. ROSSITER has scraped the barnacles of *Herrdoktorismus* off the back of *Woodstock* and restored it to us fresh and clean. This is implicit in his terse new title for a play hitherto known as *Richard II*, or *Thomas of Woodstock*, or even *Egerton MS. 1994*—and yet Scott has not said a word!

In terming the play 'a moral history', Mr. Rossiter underlines an aspect of Elizabethan drama that is, at the moment, receiving a good deal of attention. His Preface, accordingly, begins with a study of the play as a contribution to the Morality tradition in drama, and as a mirror of the contemporary conception of moral order in the state. The inquiry is valuable but, I think, dangerous, since it allows the reader to drift into the false notion that *Woodstock* and other history plays are calculated parables tributary to this moral outlook; a notion that reverts ultimately to the nineteenth-century heresy of exalting *ethos* above plot. It is, after all, not very remarkable that Elizabethan plays, and history plays in particular, were conceived in terms of the ethical and political thought of the time. This does not imply that Mr. Rossiter's comments are irrelevant. On the contrary. It was necessary, in the years immediately following the Armada, to reaffirm this moral order and pattern of existence. Whether *Woodstock* does this more amply than other plays I do not pretend to know.

It is well to remember that it was an insular, heretical, and usurping divinity that hedged Elizabeth. Her place in the moral hierarchy had no logical substance, though the wishes of her subjects gave it irresistible emotional support. I suspect, therefore, that the moral order expounded in the historical plays of the sixteenth century had in it elements of brilliant improvisation, that it was a vehicle for palatable half-truths rather than an instrument of objective doctrine. The lesson that history could most usefully teach in 1590 was that of Divine providence rather than that of Divine order, and

I suggest that the historical plays of that period are not isolated, competitive performances but a co-operative pageant illustrative of the workings of that providence. That the Tudor despotism was shown to be the very sea-mark of Providence's utmost sail goes without saying.

Woodstock, whatever its original purpose, is a pleasant play and, for 1590 or thereabouts, a good play, since it is a dramatic and not a rhetorical unity. Of course, it has its prophetic dream, its conflict of conscience, and one or two other devices taken from the common stock. Its wit is sometimes insipid, and there is often a certain artlessness about some of the speeches, arising, I suspect, from the preposterous intractability of their subject-matter. Elsewhere the utterance is direct and simple; suggesting a dramatist who was as plain as 'plain Thomas' himself. Yet careful scrutiny shows that this play is the product of a talent fastidious rather than barren. Here the dramatist happily hits on a sonorous *mot juste*: there he sets out a piece of forceful prose innocent of Euphuistic pattern, Arcadian simpering, or Senecan clap-trap. His verse has the merit of being pedestrian in its own right, for it is, mercifully, not harnessed to Tamburlaine's chariot.

Mr. Rossiter supplies a sensitive character-study of the author of *Woodstock*, but attempts no identification. Though he finds that 'there is something of a simplified Shakespeare in him', he rejects Shakespeare's claim. Nevertheless, I think the claim is worth consideration, for the habit of fathering anonymous plays on Shakespeare is only slightly more foolish than the notion that he wrote nothing before 1592. I do not for a moment suggest that *Woodstock* is Shakespeare's. I do, however, suggest that it is the kind of play that he was probably writing before he came under the potent influence of Kyd and Marlowe: that it has Shakespearian elements, and very little of any other known dramatic style: that the talent behind *Woodstock* is capacious, although uncritical and unshaped. I commend the second scene of Act III, not only as an excellent piece of dramatic writing, but also as an object of earnest meditation from this point of view.

J. M. NOSWORTHY

MOONLIGHT AT THE GLOBE. RONALD WATKINS.

Michael Joseph. 9s. 6d.

It wasn't—it was daylight in the Speech-Room at Harrow. But let that pass; this is the record of an exceedingly interesting production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Gradually the dictum that 'Shakespeare is unactable' is being proved as false as many others of the times which made it. We smile to-day to consider the superiority of those who rejected his drama because it did not fit into *their* theatre—without considering the conditions of his. Yet even to-day, as Mr. Watkins observes, we have 'every kind of experiment of lighting and scenery and costume, we see Shakespeare in modern dress and in technicolor, we have irrelevant spectacle and irrelevant "business", passages are left out . . . and sometimes speeches are inserted from other plays'. Crowning irony of all, when the Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon was burnt, we missed the chance of replacing it with a theatre wherein Elizabethan plays could be given with at least some semblance of how they were meant to be.

Five years ago, in his book *The Globe Playhouse*, Mr. John Cranford Adams showed what a rich and advanced medium was the Elizabethan theatre. With its inner and outer stage, its tiring house built on three floors, it offered an almost inexhaustible combination of exits and entrances, depths and levels, as well as an unrivalled means for quick succession of scenes. His book, published in America during the war, made 'an exact reconstruction for the first time a practical possibility'. That has not so far been undertaken, but prompted by the shape of the Speech-Room at Harrow School, Mr. Watkins has produced several of Shakespeare's plays in a manner which restores them 'as nearly as possible to the conditions of his own theatre'. Shakespeare, Mr. Watkins is among those who assert, 'knew what he was about all the time; his stagecraft is masterly; he was an actor as well as a poet.' Further, 'he was an active member of the most successful company of players in London and assisted in the production of his plays, which were the chief cause of that success.' Mr. Watkins' own production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* attempted 'to interpret the play from the viewpoint of the

Progress



against Pain

¶ Some of the oldest prescriptions known to medical science were engraved upon pillars of stone by the Egyptians, about the seventeenth century B.C. From these prescriptions no physician was allowed to deviate, upon pain of being held responsible if the patient died.

¶ It took many years for medical science to realise that knowledge is not static but progressive.

¶ One recent discovery, for instance, is that a small quantity of a powerful drug will do the work of a large dose if it is backed up by the right combination of other drugs.

¶ A direct outcome of that discovery is 'Cogene', a scientific combination, in tablet form, of four separate drugs, three of them pain relievers and the fourth a stimulant. Because only a minute quantity of each is present, there can be

none of the harmful after-effects that might attend the taking of a larger dose; yet the combination of all four in scientifically balanced proportions is so effective that 'Cogene' will 'reach' the most harassing nerve pain more rapidly than could any single drug. Supplies are limited, but your chemist will see you get *your* share. Price 1/1½d. a tube.

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Chamberlain's Men'. And I should think it succeeded. He is scholarly but never pernickety. He insists that Shakespeare's stage-directions are implicit in the text of the play. He is afraid neither of ingenuity nor of innovation, but, save in the rather doubtful matter of giving Oberon a seeding onion for sceptre, he never oversteps the mark.

Mendelssohn's music is scrapped in favour of English Elizabethan composers. The fairies are to be played (as they probably were) by choirboys. They are performed not as children, but as miniature beings and in their dressing the rainbow-gauze effects of the average stage production are happily eschewed for 'a weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in'—snake-skin, bark, rushes, bracken. The mechanicals bear in their bench—we are at once in their shop. They leave it covered with green tarpaulin, and there is the bank for the wood. Thus is the problem of transition solved! So, step by step, the author takes us through his production; and owing to his learning and love of Shakespeare, he is able to take us also step by step through the Athenian wood. At the end, we see *A Midsummer Night's Dream* more radiantly than we have seen it before. This, I am prepared to swear, his production in performance must have done. Even to read of his method reveals an intensity of beauty in a play which, up till now, I had never found one of my favourites.

H. K. FISHER

POEMS OF DEDICATION. STEPHEN SPENDER. Faber. 6s. A NEW volume by Mr. Spender is a major English literary event nowadays, and I was disappointed to find that *Poems of Dedication* did not come up to my expectations. Nothing in this book is as powerful and passionate as most of the poems in *Ruins and Visions*.

The new book is divided into four parts, and in a sense each part is really a long poem of several movements. The 'Elegy for Margaret' has many beautiful moments, but somehow the grief for a near relation's death which inspired the poem, becomes such a personal thing that the reader is embarrassed. It is as if he were trespassing on someone's private feelings.

The second part, 'Love, Birth, and Absence' contains some

Sacheverell Sitwell

THE HUNTERS AND THE HUNTED

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very lovely things, including one poem, 'Absence,' which will find an echo in nearly every heart:—

'Absence has the quality of ice
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It is a freezing lens which magnifies
The valley of the roofs and hearths below.'

A notable growth in philosophic reflection is particularly clearly marked in 'Spiritual Explorations', a sequence of seven sonnets and one other poem, which forms the third part of the book. One is reminded very strongly of the Scottish poet, Edwin Muir, by the frequent use of short, terse lines, and by such passages as this :—

'Each circular life gnaws round its little leaf
Of here and now. Each is tied within its kind.
Also nature outside within the mind
Tempts with its tree each one to be a thief.'

The texture of 'Seascape', in the fourth section, is richly musical, and evocative of the early Spender.

Having read over the poems several times, I recollected the intense irritation of Beethoven when a well-meaning nobleman, on hearing a later quartet, expressed a preference for the early ones and suggested that the composer should revert to his former style. Mr. Spender would no doubt feel equally irritated if I had the impertinence to suggest such a course to him. There are transition periods in every artist's career, when his work is less powerful than what has gone before, and has not yet reached the greater intensity of the new phase of maturity. *Poems of Dedication* seems to me to be Mr. Spender's transition poetry.

Yet make no mistake about it—I have measured this book by Mr. Spender's own very high standards; all the poems in it are vastly more sensitive and subtle than the welter of over-balanced, meaningless image-heaping which some people, with the ability to write and nothing much to say, are allowed to let pass for poetry in England at the present moment.

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A REVIEWER may derive pain rather than pleasure from the book he is to survey, for he is frequently, if not always, harassed by the desire to find faults or merits—or both. Sometimes before he has covered hardly half a dozen pages, his instinct of the ‘critic’ has produced in him such a bias for or against the book that throughout he is tortured by the unprofitable agitation of the necessity to acquire proofs for his argument. It is sweated labour, if not a dull job. However, I am glad to say that with the present anthology I have escaped this unfortunate state of affairs.

What I want to say is that this book is pleasurable indeed. As soon as I started the first poem, I was eager to finish the second. And I enjoyed the fourth no less than the third. As I went on reading with increasing interest, my self-consciousness was entirely obliterated by Mr. Waley’s superb poetry. I think if I read the originals my experience would probably be different. For one thing, I would stumble at the poems of each particular period, in which a sudden change of style and diction occurred. In this respect, Mr. Waley has re-created the poems in his own verse, transcending time and space. It is no easy job, I am fully aware. Only the scholar and the poet combined could have accomplished it.

Mr. Waley’s re-creation does not mean the neglect of the original text. In fact he sticks to the Chinese lines to the extent of being pedantic. He keeps in his translation not only the same word order, but sometimes also the same number of words as the original, while preserving most vividly the atmosphere and simplicity peculiarly characteristic of Chinese poetry. Here is an example I pick out at random:—

Here your rams come,
Their horns thronging;
Here your cattle come,
Their ears flapping.

(Herdsmen’s song, 900 B.C.)

It is from the *Book of Songs*, edited by Confucius, which we read as children after we have learned about three thousand characters, not so much for the language, which is archaic, as



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for the rhythm and music. In Mr. Waley's English translation I feel the same musical effect as I hum it and recall the same lively image as when I read the Chinese.

A large number of the poems are very popular in China. They have been on people's lips for centuries and sound as old as autumn hills. But strangely enough, in Mr. Waley's English verse, I feel a startling freshness about them, especially when I compare them with modern English poetry. They seem to reveal something exhilaratingly new and interesting, in regard to both subject matter and poetic technique: that insignificant moments in our life can be inspiration for good poems and that beautiful images can be created out of simple, daily speech. It is impossible here to quote the lines. A few titles, again taken at random, are perhaps enough to prove the abundance of poetry in our prosaic life: 'An Early Levée,' 'Business Men,' 'Starting Early from the Ch'u-Ch'eng Inn,' 'After Lunch,' 'Being Visited by a Friend during Illness,' 'After Collecting the Autumn Taxes,' 'Getting Up Early on a Spring Morning,' 'On Being Sixty,' 'My Servant Wakes Me,' and 'On His Baldness'.

CHUN-CHAN YEH

TRACKS IN THE SNOW. RUTHVEN TODD. The Grey Walls Press. 12s. 6d.

THE Grey Walls Press is doing excellent work in raising the standard of book-production from the low levels to which it unavoidably fell during the war; and this handsome book, with its 47 plates and 9 illustrations in the text, deserves praise for its looks alone. The contents, however, are able to stand up against the format. Todd's four essays cover various neglected aspects of eighteenth century art and poetry—for John Martin, one of the subjects, though working wholly in the nineteenth century, belongs in many ways to the preceding period. He was the last exponent of cosmic Sublimity, and his apocalyptic visions grew more and more out of key with Victorian centitudes.

Todd has a busy curiosity, and knows how to pry out the weak links in the academic expositions and find where the real, hidden connections lie. Thus, he rightly insists that it is



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nonsense to invent a lot of enigmas in Blake's work when so much of its symbolism can be found explained in writers like Bryant. Bryant tried to work a universal system of mythology, bringing together Greek, Norse, Egyptian, Indian myths. A large number of thinkers of the century were teased by the wish to compile such systems; and though in their work there is much mystical nonsense masquerading as esoteric knowledge, there is also an intuition of relationships for which the rational sciences of the day had no terms, no analytic instrument. They had a strong conviction of the unity of man. They felt that there must be some comprehensive key to origins, some underlying unity in all men's imaginings and concepts. The key to the whole they sought to derive from their intuitive insights.

Their conviction of organic unity had its element of profound truth, and linked with the confused mixture of experimentation and intuition which was laying the basis of biology and its allied sciences. Their mystical cocksureness was in part a protective carapace against the mocking rationalism of the age. They *knew* they were right, and irritatingly were unable to prove it. So they asserted. This fierceness of assertion, with a violent disdain of analytic proof, reached its apex in Blake; but it was characteristic of all the 'intuitive' thinkers of the times. In Blake the conflict of nonsense and profundity is given valid resolution in poetic activity: the two come together in lovely and indissoluble marriage. Thinkers like Bryant had many of Blake's ideas, but at a lower level of intensity; they had the bad luck not to be great poets, and so their work represents the first and incomplete stages of the poetic realization. That makes them all the better objects of dissection; they show us where Blake started from. They supply the necessary check; they enable us to keep clear before us the genuine crystal of his spirit and not delude ourselves that our own clouding breath is the angelic revelation.

Todd could have carried his analysis much further and shown how the Bryant type of approach was very widespread, and how it provided the first necessary schemata for the full development of an historical sense. Back in the seventeenth century scholars like C. J. Vossius, Huet, Bochart had tried to

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bring together Biblical figures and the figures of pagan myth. Nearer, Warburton in his *Divine Legation of Moses* (certainly known to Blake) had tried to show that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* tell the story of the Earth from the time of Chaos to that of Julius Cæsar, 'a sublime and regular plan . . . a popular history of Providence . . . from the Creation to his own time, through the Egyptian, Phœnician, Greek, and Roman histories,' Mallet in his *Northern Antiquities* tried to find the common principles of all European religions. 'The further back we ascend to the era of the creation, the more plainly we discover traces of this conformity among the several nations of the earth.' Parsons sought to combine Biblical and ancient Irish myths. Audigier identified Gallus, the ancestor of the French, with Noah. Voltaire tried to derive all civilization from China. Scores of elaborate workings-out along similar lines might be cited.

Blake, who draws together most of the basic threads in the culture of his day, relates the Bryant-type of unity-synthesis to the apocalyptic aspirations which found such lurid contemporary expression in the mass-movements of Joanna Southcott and Brothers. The final extinction of the apocalyptic volcano in the terrific pictures of John Martin curiously reveals the social conscience underlying the romantic violences. The world-end cataclysms clear away their smoke to reveal blueprints for docks and railways; Nineveh falls shattered in immense stone, to leave a nagging anxiety to clear up the befouled streets of London.

Todd has excellent essays on Fuseli and Martin, and on the obscure relations between the poets and the science of the day. Throughout he is blazing the way; and when I say that in every case he points towards a yet more complex exposition of the rich and subtle interrelations of art, poetry, life, and science in the eighteenth century, I am after all paying his book the best compliment I can.

JACK LINDSAY

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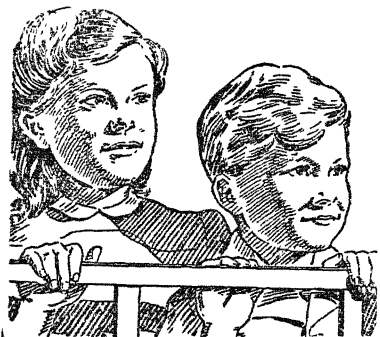
literature is designed for the English reader. His style is deceptively simple and his judgments are unambiguous. Amid the welter of divergent schools to which the period gave rise he perceives, broadly speaking, two main lines of literary development. On the one hand is the 'modern' line Mallarmé—Proust—Valéry, and on the other the naturalism, the scientific materialism, of the line Flaubert—Zola. Rimbaud (against a background of Baudelaire and Hugo) is the portent. The *Théorie du Voyant*, the search, perhaps, for *l'Inconnu*, are synthesised by Mallarmé into an æsthetic which demands 'glimpses of that world of super-reality which is the only reality'—an æsthetic of which Valéry was the purest and most successful consequence in verse, and Proust in prose.

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Over the page the new century confronts us. 'For Gide, Proust, Valéry, Malraux, Montherlant, there is no law' and therefore no thrill in the breaking of it. The pre-occupation of the nineteenth century with the moralities—a pre-occupation made all the more evident by the occasional and scandalous transgressions of the Romantic Movement, its concern with 'erotic sensibility'—suddenly becomes Gide's *l'Immoraliste* and the way is open for the *Acte Gratuit*, the amoral theory which in *Les Caves du Vatican* presaged *Les Faux-monnayeurs*.

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sensation of the eternal to come through. Art is the reconstruction of the process and the definition of the sensation'.

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HUMPHREY HARE

MOUNTAIN PROSPECT. SCOTT RUSSELL. With a foreword by Geoffrey Winthrop Young and forty-seven plates. Chatto and Windus. 18s.

As a prisoner of war, the author's scientific knowledge of plants led him to be placed in charge of gardening, the produce from which supplemented meagre rations. He persuaded the Japanese that this called for much list-making, therefore much paper, and thus he collected enough to make two copies of his book—two, in case one were confiscated. The result is one of the happiest works I have lately read, and happiness, it cannot too strongly be said, demands what it springs from: courage. *Mountain Prospect* is lucky in its author, who is worthy of the subject, and it is also lucky in its subject, which is not just one range or series of peaks, but mountains in many parts of the world.

The author seems to have had the determination to mould an unselfishly satisfactory life for himself, and even the three and a half years in a prison-camp he turned to the best advantage, for in Mr. Young's words he used them 'to recall in detail the memories farthest removed from his confined condition, those of his mountain explorations'.

His boyhood was spent in New Zealand, where he grew to love and to climb the Southern Alps—and it is worth our realization, as well as envy, that 'in the 1930's many of the peaks were still unclimbed, the passes between them uncrossed and the glaciers untrodden'. Deciding that a 'combination of interests, botanical and mountaineering, should, in the future, yield more than either if pursued separately', he came to England to study. In addition, he climbed in

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Wales and in Switzerland (very properly, as almost inevitably, making Zermatt his centre); he spent an enviable summer on Jan Mayen island in the Arctic, which included the first ascent of the eastern Beerenberg summit; and then he joined Shipton's Karakoram expedition. Of all this his book is the record, offering not only a chronicle of stimulating delight but also a comparison of climbing in different circumstances and conditions by a man whose opinion has earned respect. Mr. Scott Russell has a fine eye for beauty and a pen to describe it vividly in a prose as unaffected as his good-natured wit. Above all, the character of the man himself rises triumphantly against the giant landscapes, and the forty-seven plates represent some of the best mountain photographs it has yet been my pleasure to see.

ROBERT HERRING

GET AWAY OLD MAN. A PLAY IN TWO ACTS. WILLIAM SAROYAN. Faber. 6s.

It is not surprising to read in the author's preface that this play lasted only a fortnight on the New York stage. It is in the usual Saroyan style of apparent allegory compounded with crazy comedy. The subject seems to be nothing less than the meaning of life; but whenever there is some possibility of approaching the brink of the mystery, the author distracts his own attention by a theatrical squib, such as the continual lowering and raising of the curtain that becomes so tiresome in Act 2. Which is a pity, because Saroyan is a born writer, with a touch of poetic genius.

ALWYN ANDREW

EDITORIAL

May 1947

FROM my bedroom in the country I look across to a hill on which stands a house called 'Danes' Balk'. It marks the furthest inland that they ever reached; they were balked there, in fact. Six or seven years ago I regarded that house with some feeling; 'so far and no further,' I said, awaiting other invaders, and 'they never passed'.

It is some time now, centuries truly, since Denmark invaded forcibly. At to-day's conferences, which resemble so much the collisions of rabbits seeking to intricate warrens against onslaughts of atomic foxes they suspect to be each other, Denmark may not be classed a Great Power. Nevertheless, she has made, preserved, and developed her own status, her own standards and a spirit which, whilst rooted deeply in native soil, spreads (because it is rooted deeply) widely and beneficently. Faced ourselves with what it may be understatement to term decline from being a Great Power, we can do worse than consider how the Danes have followed their era of material militance with mental adventure and spiritual power; have achieved a way of looking at life, and of feeling it, better and more lasting, perhaps, than other vaunted 'ways of life' and, though theirs is a small country, in the regions that matter have always ranged far.

Of Denmark's place in the nineteenth century, Oehlen-schläger, Hans Andersen, Brandes, and (for better or worse) Kierkegaard well made sure. But we have come to distrust much in which that century as a whole believed. We have regarded it as leading logically to a blind alley; though, to change the metaphor, it may be our own failure to prune that has prevented it bearing riper fruit. To-day, Free Thought has constricted into censorship, writers' pools, propaganda; the Freedom of the Press is held to induce irresponsibility; the Free Woman is conscripted into the Forces, the Civil Service, or,

crowning irony for the suffragettes, the Police. Finally, despite radio, flying, education, most countries to-day live closed-in from each other. There result insularity, ignorance, and the worst products of these, prejudice and lack of mutual encouragement.

This is one reason why I find it my duty as well as pleasure to provide frequent special issues dealing with literature in lands we were once free to visit. There can be no more striking proof of the need to know what is being written elsewhere than the fact that there is so much Danish material, my own Editorial has to be made a brief note. That is as it should be. My role is not to come before the curtain, but to raise it.

Elias Bredsdorff introduces the number with a masterly survey of contemporary Danish writing. He is followed by one of Denmark's leading critics and by two who, in Myths and Aphorisms, are artists in that particularly Danish gift of combining the miniature with all-embracing insight. The fertility of Danish dramatists is represented by the greatest, Kaj Munk, and three stories speak not only for themselves but for a form which could fill a whole number. Modern poets appear in translation by R. P. Keigwin, whose work is not only superlatively approved by the Danes but read by the English with the double enjoyment of translation which is also poetry.

For further research there may be consulted his *The Jutland Wind* (Blackwell, 1944); the periodical *Denmark* (125 Pall Mall, S.W. 1); and the Danish chapters in Topsøe-Jensen's *Scandinavian Literature from Brandes to Our Day* (1929, Allen and Unwin). There is, further, an anthology of *Modern Danish Authors*, in English, put out by the Scandinavian Publishing Company last year.

The enthusiastic kindness of all concerned have made the preparation of this number one of our few pleasures this winter. In addition to thanking authors, translators, and publishers, I wish to make specially grateful acknowledgments to Elias Bredsdorff, R. P. Keigwin, and C. E. Aagaard, of the Danish Embassy in London, for their most active assistance; and also to Miss Elsa Gress, of Copenhagen, who, though hampered by illness, forwarded some of the material.

DANISH LITERATURE SINCE

1930

ELIAS BREDSORFF

CAND. MAG.

(*Queen Alexandra Lecturer in Danish, University College, London.*)

VERY few Danish writers have acquired an international reputation. Among the writers of the nineteenth century only Hans Andersen, Søren Kierkegaard, and Georg Brandes are universally known, although also men like Oehlenschläger, Grundtvig, Blicher, J. P. Jacobsen, and Pontoppidan have had a great influence in several parts of the world outside Scandinavia. Among the Danish authors of the twentieth century only two are internationally known by now, both still living and writing at the age of seventy-odd years: Martin Andersen Nexø, the author of the proletarian novels *Pelle the Conqueror* and *Ditte*—an undaunted exponent of revolutionary socialism—and Johannes V. Jensen, a Darwinistic evolutionist whose versatile talents as a novelist, a lyrical poet, a short story-writer and an essayist were officially appreciated when in 1944 he was awarded the Literary Nobel Prize. In a literary classification they mainly belong to the first quarter of the century, but they have both continued writing—Andersen Nexø, apart from short stories and articles, a recent continuation of *Pelle* and four wonderful volumes of *Memoirs*, Jensen mostly essays and ‘myths’, that fascinating mixture of a short story and an essay of which he is a complete master, and they both form a valuable link to contemporary Danish literature.

The Danish novel has flourished in recent years, and an outlook on two decades of Danish novels provides an interesting and many-coloured picture. In its contents it ranges from the dissector’s sharp knife, cutting mercilessly into the wounds of present conditions, to an individualistic escapism,

art for art's sake! But what remain of lasting value are mostly a number of novels, contemporary or historical in their contents, social or psychological, but written by men and women who are deeply concerned about the future of their country; and as the shadow of the First Great War lies over the novels in the beginning of this period, so the shadow of Nazi Germany and the Second Great War—realized by many as a reality long before it came—lies over the novels of the latter part of the thirties. And the period of the Occupation means to a certain extent that Danish novelists were gagged—or had to find new ways of expressing themselves.

Characteristic of the first period are two Danish novelists who tried to analyse the unhealthy post-war period from almost opposite angles. They are Tom Kristensen and Jacob Paludan. In 1931 Tom Kristensen, who was already well known, both as one of the leading lyrical poets and as the most eminent critic of the 'twenties, wrote a novel called *Destruction*. The title was symbolical, for it was the gospel of 'destructionism' he preached here, and the drunkard-hero of this novel deliberately spoils himself in an anarchistic belief in the necessity of spoiling everything—himself, to begin with—before anything new can be attained. Jacob Paludan's great novel *Jørgen Stein* (1932-33) also dealt with the post-war crisis, but gave a different interpretation of the illness of contemporary Denmark; his was a deeply pessimistic novel where he scourged his countrymen for their materialism, their wantonness, and their lack of morals. Curiously enough, they were both influenced by great English novelists: Tom Kristensen by D. H. Lawrence, and Paludan by Aldous Huxley. These two Danish novelists—both eminent artists—were then the dominating representatives of 'the generation that stumbled in the start', to quote an expression coined by Paludan about the people who had just grown up when the First Great War broke out. Would that be the fate of the Danish novel, to choose between the Scylla of destructive nihilism and the Charybdis of reactionary pessimism? Was there no road between?

There was. The novels of Hans Kirk, Knuth Becker and Harald Herdal—to mention three of the most outstanding

social writers of this period—were of a quite different kind, and no less seriously concerned about the future of Denmark. Hans Kirk's first novel appeared in 1928, *The Fishermen* (shortly to be published in English in the Penguin Library), and was followed in 1936 and 1939 by two other novels, *The Land Labourers* and *The New Times*. Kirk at the same time represents the best traditions of the Danish novel and a complete renewal of it. In his works are elements of the special Danish kind of *Heimat*-novels, and there is a reliability in his descriptions as in a documentary picture. But Kirk, is a sociologist, and his novels deal with the dependency of human nature and ideas upon the social conditions under which people live. He is a Marxist and a Freudian, and his novels are the finest examples of social realism in modern Danish literature. They are 'collective novels', that is they deal with social groups, and yet the psychology of the individuals is convincing and true.

Knuth Becker's main work is still in progress. The first volume was published in 1932, and volumes 7-8 in 1944. It is an autobiographical novel—about the boy Kai Gøtsche, an imaginative and sensitive child who is driven into lies and crimes by the morbid morality of the grown-ups, by their lack of understanding and their strict and brutal conceptions of good and evil. The entire novel is a violent protest against the injustice done to this child, and for the social and pedagogical views it expressed the novel roused a great stir and discussion, especially the parts describing conditions in a Danish Reform School (and here Becker spoke with authority, having been educated at such a school himself). As a whole the novel is a great piece of literature, especially the first volumes, where he has not indulged in the mannerism which has stained the later parts.

Harald Herdal is a Copenhagen proletarian by birth and has taken up the inheritance of Martin Andersen Nexø. His novels are bitter and anti-capitalistic; his is the duty mercilessly to reveal the rottenness, the dirt, and the hypocrisy of the present society. But—apart from a few exceptions—he lacks the warmth and the humour which Kirk and Becker, and certainly also Andersen Nexø, have; there is so much

more hatred than love in his books—but the warmth and the love which his novels lack is to be found in his very fine poetry, which ranges from socialist agitation to personal love lyrics. His best novel was published shortly after the outbreak of the war, *A Part of the Country*, and here he relentlessly revealed a Denmark which was both spiritually and morally unprepared for the great fight to come.

Other important social novelists are Mogens Klitgaard and Martin A. Hansen. Klitgaard, whose death at a very young age in 1945 was a great loss to Danish literature, had his literary *début* in 1937 with a novel about the dreariness and drabness of a poor middle-class man, and this is the best Danish analysis of the mentality of the white collar proletariat—a subject of particular interest in those years when Fascism seemed to recruit mainly among this class of society. The ordinary, unimportant people remained his favourite subjects in all the six novels he wrote, even when twice he dived back into history, which gave a better outlet to his very fine sense of humour. But history was never escapism to him; on the contrary, it was his way of making his readers realize their own position by showing them an obvious parallel, and Klitgaard's novels were a constant warning against the dangers of Fascism.

Martin A. Hansen may be called one of the most artistic of modern Danish novelists—so much so that one may sometimes fear that he is in danger of ending in mere artisticness. After two apparently social *Heimat*-novels in 1935–37 he wrote a grotesque social satire *Jonathan's Journey* (1940), and an historical novel *Happy Christopher* (1945). His last book is a collection of short stories, *The Thorn-Bush* (1946), written during the Occupation and dealing with the conflict between illusion and reality. Martin A. Hansen is an extraordinarily gifted prose-writer and may become a very great novelist.

The novels of Jørgen Nielsen, Michael Tejn, Aage Dons, and H. C. Branner are pre-eminently psychological more than social. Jørgen Nielsen, who died in 1945 at the age of forty-three, wrote five novels and several very good short stories between 1929 and 1944. Most of his novels take place among Jutland peasants, and their constantly recurrent themes are suppressed feelings, hatred, sin and fear. *The Depths* (1940) is

his most remarkable novel, a sad and melancholy story of silent hatred and a desperate mental fight between a boy and his father.

Similar problems, but from a different social sphere, are the subjects of Michael Tejn's novels, of which *The Dream of Reality* (1942) is technically the most superb. But he has hardly found his final artistic form yet.

Aage Dons is exclusively a psychological novelist, among whose novels *The Soldiers' Well* (1936)¹ is the masterpiece. It is a novel about the complications of the erotic life of a woman who ends by becoming a murderess. The conflicts between primitiveness and nature are his constant themes, and Dons is absolutely void of any social or political tendencies whatsoever; he concentrates on giving reliable and penetrating analyses of the depths and conflicts of human souls.

H. C. Branner has written three novels and several volumes of short stories. He is a fine psychologist whose books deal with the loneliness of men, the dangers of fear and the dangers of power. *The Dream About a Woman* (1941) takes place in Denmark immediately before the War and is marked by the fear of what is to come. As a short story-writer H. C. Branner is superb, undoubtedly the best among his generation, especially in his analyses of the minds of children.

Knud Sønderby started his literary career as an intelligent pupil of Hemingway. His first novel, *In a Jazz Age* (1931), was a book about a young generation of sophisticated bourgeois, living a life of sexual promiscuity, with jazz-music and films and sport as their main interest, but behind the anti-sentimental make-up they are sensitive and embarrassed. Sønderby's best novel, *A Woman Is Superfluous* (1936), deals with the complete lack of understanding between two generations, and this novel has recently been made into a remarkable play, produced by the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen.

Hans Scherfig is the elegant satirist among contemporary Danish novelists. Originally a painter, he wrote a small detective story, *The Dead Man*, in 1937 which became at once a fantastic success, not as a detective novel, but as an extraordinarily witty book. Since then he has continued writing

¹ Published by Cassell, 1940, in translation by Terence Shiell.

novels that are all disguised as detective stories, but their real value lies in the acid satire contained in them. *The Lost Spring* is a deadening blow against the stupidity of secondary school education, and his latest book, *Idealists*, ridicules the various idealistic sects having each their own easy remedy to improve the world.

Nis Petersen—another of the young Danish novelists who died young—wrote in 1931 an extraordinary novel called *The Street of the Sandalmakers*,¹ where the scene was laid in Ancient Rome. This book at once became a best-seller which everyone should read, and it was a well-composed and beautifully written book in a rather journalistic style, full of deliberate anachronisms and bringing Ancient Rome very close to modern readers. It was obvious that Nis Petersen was a master of language, a wizard who knew the art of playing with words, an entertainer of unusual literary gifts. And this impression was confirmed by his later books, the novel *Spilt Milk* (1934)² about the Civil War in Ireland, and his many short stories—funny or tragic, well-written and well-composed, mostly entertaining anecdotes where humorously and harmlessly he caricatured people. There is rarely any deep psychology, and he has no particular gospel to preach, but he was the born story-teller. But however well-written and well-composed his prose works may be he always gave others, brilliantly and cleverly; but the impression of his poetry is so much greater, for there he gave his own desperate self.

Isak Dinesen (the *nom de plume* of Baroness Karen Blixen Finecke) belongs chronologically to this period, and her two main works, *Seven Gothic Tales* and *My African Farm*—both written and published in English before they appeared in Denmark—are the works of a very great writer. But however interesting she is as a novelist, her beautifully artistic books are in no way representative of this period, and they fall outside the scope of this article.

I have chosen to deal with a small selection of contemporary Danish novelists whom I consider to be the most significant and representative of the period. Scores of other Danish

¹ An English translation published in 1933.

² An English translation published in 1935.

novelists might well deserve mentioning, but let it suffice in conclusion to give two more names: Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen and William Heinesen, two Faroese novelists of great importance. Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen's novel *Barbara* (1939)—which will shortly appear in English—gives a fascinating portrait of a charming and wonderful, but completely amoral girl in the Faroe Islands. William Heinesen's *Windy Dawn* (1934) and *Noatun* (1938)¹ are trustworthy and well-written descriptions of Faroese people and nature.

The Danish drama during the last fifteen years has been remarkable for one thing: for the first time in Danish history there have been no less than three really great dramatists living at the same time. Their names are Kaj Munk, Kjeld Abell, and Soya.

Kaj Munk's personal fate is now known by many people outside Denmark. He was a parson in a small vicarage on the western coast of Jutland; his first play was produced by the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen in 1928, and in a few years he was universally considered to be Denmark's leading playwright. As a political philosopher he was rightly looked upon as a dilettante in the years before the war, and his sympathies for Hitler and Mussolini estranged him from great sections of the Danish people. But when the Germans occupied Denmark every feeling of sympathy for the Nazis vanished, and he became one of the most daring and violent spokesmen of a patriotic resistance. The German efforts to stop him were in vain; when they banned his books they appeared illegally, and he took every opportunity to scorn the suppressors. In January, 1944, Kaj Munk was taken away from his home by the Germans and murdered in a ditch not far from his vicarage. He became one of the great martyrs of the Occupation, and his assassination brought new masses into the ranks of the active Resistance Movement. But, let it be said quite clearly, it is not only the halo of the martyrdom that makes Munk seem a great literary character. Kaj Munk is a dramatist of unusual qualities, and some of his dramas, like *An Idealist* (on Herod the Great), *The Word* (on

¹ Published as *Niels Peter* by Routledge in translation by Jan Noble, 1939.

the reality of miracles), *He Sits at the Melting-Pot* (inspired by the persecution of the Jews), and the small play *Before Cannae*¹ (on power versus humanism) will always remain great landmarks in the history of the Danish drama. Kaj Munk was a religious agitator as a dramatist—he used the stage as a pulpit from which he could preach to his people—and they all centre on the eternal problems of God and Man. He chose his subjects where he found them—thus the biography of Henry VIII by Francis Hackett inspired him to write a rather boisterous drama called *Cant*—but the central problems of his dramas were always the problems of Christianity. He made an art of the shock-effect, so that he often wrote about the most solemn things in a colloquial and very unclerical slang; and the frivolousness and flippancy of his style might often be a deliberate effort to create a sensation. In spite of his early death, Kaj Munk has contributed greatly to Danish literature, and in many fields: travelling books, collections of essays, short stories, sermons, nursery rhymes, many collections of poems and a very readable autobiography, *Spring Comes So Gently* (1942). But his lasting effect will be as a dramatist. A great cult has grown up of Kaj Munk and his works, but even those of us who feel very critical towards many of his writings agree that Kaj Munk as a serious dramatist holds a very prominent position, simply because the best of his dramas are written by a dramatic genius.

Kjeld Abell is as a playwright quite different from Kaj Munk, both in his ideas, his technique, and his style, but the best among his plays are no less important. His first play—which was also produced at the Embassy Theatre in London in 1936—*The Melody That Got Lost*² (1935), was an intellectually elegant and amusing topical play about the dullness and drabness in which habits and traditions and social snobbery force so many people to live, with an appeal to revolt against the humdrum of such an existence. Kjeld Abell knows a lot about the possibilities of the stage—his plays are a complete revolt against the naturalistic drama, and a

¹ Shortly to be broadcast in English translation of R. P. Keigwin.

² Published by Allen and Unwin, 1939, in adaptation by Francis Sinclair and Ronald Adam.

deeper perspective always underlies his remarkable dialogue. This super-intellectual playwright has a humour and a sense of poetry which is related to the fairy-tales of Hans Andersen. Since his first play his dramas have constantly increased in importance. *Eve* (1936) was an imaginative and witty argument against the right of parents to treat their children as part of their property, and form their minds according to acknowledged models. *Anna Sophie Hedvig* (1939) was Abell's most important pre-war play, where the great human and political problems of right and wrong, of suppression and liberty, of Nazism and democracy, were reflected in the individual fate of an ordinary Danish woman teacher. It was a most serious comment on the discussion about the position of Denmark as against Nazi-Germany before the War. During the Occupation, Kjeld Abell took an active part in the Danish Resistance Movement, and after the liberation a new great play by him has been produced, *Silkeborg* (1946), the post-war play of Denmark, where the most essential problems Denmark is facing as a nation to-day have been illustrated in the light of the Occupation period.

Soya wrote his first play, *The Parasites*, a harsh social satire, in 1929, and in spite of its dramatic force it then passed almost unnoticed. For several years he then wrote radio features which were rarely used, and plays that were printed and occasionally produced, but never any successes. A lot of entertaining and extremely funny short stories gained him many readers, however, and he was generally looked upon as a good story-writer who was unhappily in love with the stage. Some of his dramas were certainly very good reading-dramas, but could scarcely be produced effectively. From 1940 to 1943, however, Soya wrote a dramatic trilogy that immediately proved him to be an unusually fine playwright. Especially the two last plays of the trilogy, *Two Threads* and *Thirty Years' Respite*, were in their dramatic technique so eminent that they were comparable to the best plays of Ibsen, and his plays had an enormous success. Furthermore, Soya suddenly took everybody by surprise by writing a great psychological novel, *My Grandmother's House* (1943), in which he also proved to be a novelist of unusual

qualities. The literary critics who had looked upon Soya as a bit of a nuisance, a talented busy-body, good for nothing, had to reverse their opinions, and now Soya rightly is considered one of the three great playwrights of his generation. But it is his technique and his dialogue that are so fascinating, very seldom his ideas, which are much less positive and urgent than Munk's and Abell's. Soya's dramas deal with a Nemesis-idea and his belief in an invisible destiny governing the fates of men and weaving them together into a strange pattern, and one is thrilled by the dramatic suspense and the ingenious dramatic construction of the plays rather than by their ideological contents.

And then the poets! Tom Kristensen and Otto Gelsted were even in the twenties the finest lyrical exponents of their age, but Tom Kristensen has only occasionally during the last fifteen years reached the summits of his best poetry before 1930, and so many of his recent poems suffer from the fact that he has been attached to a great paper where he has written so many *In Memoriams*. He is, however, one of the genuine lyrical poets of modern Denmark and has greatly enriched Danish poetry.

Since his poem *The Show Boat* in 1924, gradually Otto Gelsted has become a more outspoken ideological poet, and his strange mixture of classical training and revolutionary ideas has produced stanzas of an extraordinary power and sensitiveness. This subdued naturalist and exquisite love-poet is sometimes turned into a violent defender of liberty and humanism, and sometimes into an old philosophic sage whose message was important and eternal. In the years of danger he followed the best traditions of all great poetry by constantly imploring his people to realize the danger and prepare for the fight. During the War, Gelsted had to escape to Sweden, whence he returned after the Liberation with an impossible novel and a wonderful collection of *Poems of a Refugee* that showed how deeply he belonged to his people, and how great a poetic interpreter of them he was.

Paul la Cour is a pupil of the modern French intellectual school of poetry—often very difficult to understand fully, and

although greatly gifted never a poet who will win—or wants to win—popularity. Nis Petersen has been mentioned as a prose writer, but deserves special mention as a poet. His poems range from romantic ballads to epigrammatic stanzas with an effect as if they were hewn in marble. Many of them are deeply personal, and they make one afraid of the desperate abyss of his soul. Others are tender as a mother's love and carry one away by their beautiful and exquisite simplicity.

Harald Herdal's poetry must also be mentioned. Only a handful of his poems are of really great, but these are of lasting value. Jens August Schade is the *enfant terrible* among modern Danish poets—and he is one of those rare individuals who is nothing but a poet, even when he tries to write prose. He baffles his readers constantly—when they think he is a deep and original poet he may be just cheating them, and when they think he is just a naive child he may be a deliberate and very clever artist. A few collections of pure and beautiful poetry, and several collections of sheer nonsense is Schade's contribution to Danish literature. Alex Garff is a versatile and original lyrical naturalist whose notes are always sober and in tune. Hulda Lutken, who died recently, was the author of several interesting novels, but she was greatest as a poet; her poetry is passionate and mystic, full of sorrow and suffering and loneliness—her poems were revelations of her own desperate soul. Poul Sørensen is sometimes good, sometimes very bad as a poet, but seldom very great. He is best in his patriotic poems, and he deserves mentioning because of his national poetry during the Occupation. A far greater poet, however, was the quite young Morten Nielsen, who tragically lost his life at the age of 22 as a result of an accident during the war. He was also an active member of the Resistance Movement, and his death meant a very great loss to modern Danish poetry. In spite of his youth, Morten Nielsen had gained a name as one of the best among the generation of quite young poets, and his *Posthumous Poems*, published in 1945, showed that there had been every reason to expect much from him. Tove Ditlevsen is another young poet—also an author of novels and short stories, by the way—and after the death of Hulda Lutken she is, with her 29 years,

the finest poet among the women writers. There is a tender beauty in her poetry, and some of her lyrics are of a classic clarity. Ole Sarvig may be taken as the most talented representative of the very youngest school of Danish poets; his abstract, surrealist poetry may often be difficult to grasp—and should not be grasped by the intellect alone—but the note of sincerity and soberness in his strange poetry is convincing.

Let me in conclusion say a few words about Danish Literature during the Occupation.¹ The vast majority of Danish writers were anti-Nazis and had been anti-Nazis since Nazism began to exist. Several of them had, as has been shown, daringly taken up the fight even before it was forced upon them, and they had done their valuable part in building up a moral and spiritual defence against the penetration of Nazi ideas. When Denmark was occupied by the Germans on April 9, 1940, conditions were, of course, at once different, and the Danish authors had to find new ways. Some, like Kaj Munk, Kjeld Abell, Soya, Poul Sørensen, and several others, tried to tell the essential truths by writing of historical or imaginary parallel situations, but they were usually found out and their works suppressed. Many authors joined the active Resistance Movement, not always necessarily as journalists of the illegal papers, several of them changing the pen for a sten gun or a saboteur's explosives.

Only a small handful of Danish authors failed completely and made themselves instruments of the enemy. They were mostly people who had never had any real success, bitter failures who felt that they had never been valued according to their merits and that this was their chance of an easy way to fame and influence—people like the playwright Svend Borberg, the novelists Svend Fleuron and Harald Tandrup, and a few minor poets. Only two of them had any real literary significance: Harald Bergstedt, a fine and exquisite lyrical poet, and the deserving, super-patriotic poet Valdemar Rørdam—both active supporters of the Nazi ideology during the Occupation. Valdemar Rørdam died shortly after the

¹ For further information see my article in *The Norseman*, May-June, 1946, 'Danish Literature During the Occupation.'

Liberation, and Bergstedt is at present in prison, on a sentence as a traitor to his country.

A new and valuable kind of literature produced by the Occupation came from two of the young Danish patriots whom the Germans executed for their participation in the Resistance Movement. Kim Malthe-Bruun, a young intellectual sailor, who was barely twenty-two years old when he was executed by the Germans, was burninglly and youthfully an idealist. Since his death, his letters to his fiancée and his mother have been published, and no one who reads these can help being deeply and seriously moved by the youthful candour and beauty of style. Here is a young Shelley who lost his life in the Tuscan waves of the Resistance Movement. Together with these letters, although quite different in style, may be mentioned the *Prison Diary and Last Letters* of Georg Quistgaard, another victim of the German terror in Denmark. His illegally written diary and letters, smuggled out behind the backs of the Germans and published after the Liberation, may perhaps be said to give the truest picture of the young Danes of the Resistance Movement. Unromantic, honest, and sincere, subdued in style, afraid of all big words and phrases, full of irony against the Germans and full of a charming self-irony—and yet with a deadfast certainty of having done the right thing—such was the mentality of the best among the Danish patriots, and such is the portrait that emerges from Quistgaard's diary and letters. These writings are an important inheritance; they are literature of a special kind and must not be judged by normal standards, but they are documents stained by the blood of the best of Danes.

HANS ANDERSEN AND HIS FAIRY TALES

PAUL V. RUBOW

TO most of us, Hans Andersen (1805-1875) is the typical Danish writer. That may be a mistake, for others have as much of the native blood in their veins. But he was happy enough to live and write in an age when feeling for the national features in landscape and character was developed as never before. Denmark had been discovered, and the great writers and poets from the first decades of the century had revealed the thousand secrets of the language. Especially from the poets he had learned to describe and impart the visible world by suggestion. He wove into his novels, poems, and fairy tales—a whole picture of his country. At first his conception of nature was rather ordinary. But after his travels in France and Italy he used his own eyes, and later he got to know his own country very well. He describes in a way which is never partial all strata of society and many different types of men: the fashionable world which attracted him without blinding him (for after all he was a writer of fairy tales), the scholar, the artist, the young officer, the clerk, the watchman in the street, the little girl selling matches, the prisoner in his cell. He knows the countryside too, as well as the town. You will find Fyen, the island of his childhood, in such tales as *The Travelling Companion* and *The Buckwheat*, Zealand in his tales from manor houses such as *The Ugly Duckling* and *The Happy Family*; and Jutland, which he discovered as early as the 'thirties and which during the 'fifties became the main country, in *A Story from the Dunes* and *The Bishop of Børglum*. Instead of the empty landscape of the traditional fairy tales he inserted the real countryside with sun and wind, the indigenous nature and climate: 'It was lovely in the country—it was summer! The wheat was yellow, the oats were green, the hay was stacked in the green meadows, and the

stork went strutting about...' Instead of the roses, lilies, and fig-trees of the popular fairy tales we have a complete Danish flora including pease-blossom, burdock, and many weeds. The poet knew the secret of each flower as he shows in such tales as *The Snow Queen*, where the orange lily, the convolvulus, the hyacinth, the buttercup, and the white narcissus in turn tell their dreams. Andersen is a specialist in the seasons. *The Snow Queen* is like a whole mythus of the birth and death of the year, and of the intervention in human destiny by an animated nature. Each month has its own description: in January 'the panes are pasted with snow, and it falls in heaps from the roofs'; in March the moss shines fresh on the trunks of the trees; in July the evening sky gleams like gold and the moon is up between dusk and dawn; in October the King of the Year paints from his big colour-pot.

In his youth, Andersen had been apprenticed to the dominant poetic schools. He had learnt the perfect sensual form from Oehlenschläger, and in J. L. Heiberg's school he had acquired proficiency in the neat miniature art which qualified him to write his first tales. From this master he learnt that all kinds of poetry are good, even the minor one, in which he himself was to become a master.

He tried his hand at the novel and at every kind of drama. He wrote little heart-warming poems, sensitive impressions or genre-pieces, but the restriction of form was too narrow for his huge richness of whims and visions. For the same reason he was unable to find a place in the drama, although he wrote very good dialogue and acquired considerable technical skill as the years went on. He was not the man to create characters. He did not believe in the adults with their hard crust round their souls and their many dead possibilities, and he did not live with them in their struggles and their love. He also left the novel, though he was a matchless raconteur. There are brilliant scenes in some of his works of fiction. In *O.T.*, for instance, there is a scene in which a forgotten hat provokes an unexpected quarrel between a father and his son; in less than a minute it turns out that both the respectable gentlemen have a mistress, and what is more, she is the same woman. His lever is the intense impression of reality fixed on

paper in the first stage of an experience. Such little pieces of prose, in which unexpected aspects of life are revealed by a new effect of light broken in an unusual way, are also the germ of his tales. By developing the seed hidden in such poetic experiences he succeeded in creating his famous tales.

A very important feature in these tales is the narrator. Andersen took over this anonymous character from the popular tale. He is an intermediary between the reader and the experience. In some of the shorter tales his presence is felt everywhere, in others he hangs back discreetly. But in all cases it is he who gives to the tale its definite form. Without him Andersen's art would be too subjective for the small genre. In the first tales, like *The Goloshes of Fortune*, he is an actor who is very much alive. Note, for instance, the beginning of this tale where the two fairies talk together in the anteroom of a Copenhagen home, giving us the theme of the story, then the quick changing of scene when, almost unprepared, we are put back three hundred years in time, then again Copenhagen interiors, interrupted by an animal fable, and in the next moment an Italian scene. In conclusion the life and death of the theme are discreetly touched upon. But in the tales from the 'forties, Andersen's great time, these living mimics are replaced by the tragic and the comic masks. On a small scale he now produces the great art. The many sentimental asides, the playful, satirical tricks from his first period are now gone. He realized his ideal and created in his tales a universal poetry. He condensed the stuff of tragedy into a nut-shell and wrote *The Story of a Mother* and *The Little Match Girl*. He wrote tales that are comedies in miniature such as *The Top and the Ball*, *The Shepherdess and the Chimney-Sweep*. On the same scale he wrote such stories of life as *The Ugly Duckling* and *The Fir Tree*. Already in his first period he had been able to re-cast the burlesque heroic poem in the vest-pocket size of *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*. It was his ambition to translate all the beautiful, but heavy poetry of the world into a form that was short, rich, and clear. He tackled the greatest subjects when he dared to write about the closed book of fate, about pity, ambition, and even about love, of which he knew little.

Later, in another and larger group of tales and stories, the narrator shows another face. Late in the 'fifties, he disguises himself as a divinely inspired bard. Like Ossian on the heath, he lets the elements sound in his work without mediating. He has sung *The Wind Tells of Valdemar Daae and His Daughters*, this wonderful tragedy of fate in prose (it is called prose), the most original work of fiction in our literature. He also wrote *The Last Dream of the Old Oak* that tells about his unstilled longing for love and about the fettered strength of his soul.

But most of the stories in his great collection are the popular tales. Starting from the two types of popular tales we can divide Andersen's work into two similar main types.

In one group he simply re-tells the tales which tradition has brought him, often in a language closely related to the popular one. These are tales such as *The Tinder-Box*, *Little Claus and Big Claus*, *The Princess and the Pea*, *The Swineherd*, *What Father Does*, and *The Emperor's New Clothes*—that is to say some of the best known and beloved of all. It holds good of all these tales that Andersen sticks to humorous models. They are old rogue's stories. He has renewed them in a style close to the original. He retains all essential features down to the component of popular formulas. Before he became a writer of tales he had written comical stories in the manner of the medieval *fabliaux* and of La Fontaine and the Danish poets Wessel and Baggesen.

Another group consists of the serious tales: *The Little Mermaid*, *The Travelling Companion*, *The Snow Queen*, and others. Here Andersen uses his models quite freely or works entirely on his own. The point is that the serious popular tales have roots in a mystical conception of the world and use an apparatus of magic requisites which he could not lightly transfer into his own poetry. Here he describes a milieu, dresses up the real or fantastic figures and animates the supernatural elements that had in the course of time lost their original meaning.

He knew this job. That, in a certain sense, is his secret. He was a primitive soul to whom the surrounding world was alive. Andersen was not an orthodox Protestant; as a religious man he was a rationalist. But that is of no import. At the

bottom of the world which Science described to him lay, according to his holy conviction, the *fairy tale*. To him dead things were alive.

Hans Andersen is the greatest illusionist of literature. This is due to his kinship with the child's mind, his faculty of day-dreaming. Happy are those who are able to see motives in everything. One sometimes sees a child getting bored with his toy and going to another child who is playing with another. The first child takes away the second one's toy. Then the second child will take two sticks and play with them. The first child will look to see what he is doing and does not understand it. He lacks the gift of illusion, and that cannot be borrowed. Early childhood is the proper age of illusion. Boyhood is more one-sided, boys early acquire a certain maidenlike hardness and narrowness. Youth means a sort of revenge for the productive mind. This age has a passion for tragedy. Manhood again is poor in imagination and vegetative meditation. Poets often dry up in the real working years of life—unless (like Kierkegaard or Andersen) they 'escape when they are going to be men'. The old, when they are not completely withered in the struggle of life, become poetic again and play with their tools, arbitrary remembrance replacing imagination.

In Hans Andersen there was something of a youth, an aunt, and a child. He has the spiritual intensity and power of imagination of early childhood. He has the child's gift of imitation. His tales are full of mimics, of imitated gestures and speeches, including an immense store of animal sounds. Another childish feature is his impetuosity. He is said to have been hysterical as children sometimes are. And he was a great dreamer and visionary in the manner of little folks. He lets his scholar ask the Shadow who has been in the Anteroom of Poetry: 'Did all the gods of antiquity walk through the great halls? Did the old heroes fight there? Did sweet children play there and tell you their dreams?'

However, dreams alone do not suffice. I have mentioned that Andersen's tales build on the popular tales. It is even certain that the book of tales would never have been created had he not from the start retained a humble attitude towards

the popular art of story-telling. His heroes and heroines can be followed back to the primitive tales that were once the common property of all European peoples. The child-hero, whom Andersen first introduced in his novels, but only made something of in his tales, is an inheritance from the brave prince or the innocent Cinderella of the popular tales. The child-hero in the serious tales has morals and right on his side in Andersen's version as with the old story-tellers. But in the merry tales the hero is a rogue, even though sometimes a sympathetic rogue like Little Claus.

Andersen's enchanted world is also anchored in the popular tales. The world of the old tales is magic and ceremonial. Its characters are stiff like dolls, the plot is like a formula. The people live up to their definition: the good by their goodness, the cunning by their artfulness, the stupid by their stupidity. They are known by their deeds. The hero is one with his action. The three lives of three brothers are told in perfectly parallel terms. The characters and the plot are reiterated from one tale to another. After overcoming various obstacles the hero wins the princess, who is often bewitched or ill, the old king gladly gives half his kingdom away, the stepmother persecutes her stepdaughter, and so on. The characters behave in a similar way under similar circumstances. When the princess carries a secret she pretends to be dumb. When a man has lost his wife, he marries for his daughter's sake a widow who is wicked and has a daughter who is also wicked, and the two wicked women chase away the real daughter. When a man is in distress an unknown person appears to help him, but demands as a reward that which his wife carries under her girdle; the man thinks it is the keys, while in reality it is the child. When two young lovers die, two red roses grow on their graves, and on the grave of a virgin grows a pale lily.

All this is found in Hans Andersen's tales as well. But he uses the supernatural with caution. In *The Travelling Companion* or *The Wild Swans* he still sticks to tradition. John gets three feathers from the swan's wing and a small bottle. He puts a big tub of water by the bridal bed, and when the princess comes to the bed he pushes her into the water and dips her three times, having thrown the feathers and the contents of

the bottle into it; then she is transformed. Elisa throws eleven shirts over the swans and eleven beautiful princes stand before her. But in his later tales the supernatural is balanced against the profoundly human. In *The Story of a Mother* the Night and the Lake and the Thorn-Bush are personifications that extend beyond the real world—but the mother's love is a natural force stronger than they. Andersen also favoured a form of conclusion like that of *The Little Match Girl* or *A Story from the Dunes*: the great ecstasy of release from mortal misery precedes the moment of death and is followed by a description of the immensity and inclemency of the surrounding world.

I have tried to give glimpses into Hans Andersen's workshop. It is a curious shop, for Andersen is in a way the hero of all his tales, just as he is in another sense the narrator of all of them. Yet it is not a purely subjective and arbitrary world he creates. As he has inherited strong traditions from the storytellers of the past, so he employs a technique that must force from us a deep admiration. Looking closer at his work we find that his small poetic creations are actually very complicated. There is a firmness of form, even though it is wound about with the vines of imagination. It is a very national work, but a work that has its roots in an international kind of literature. Behind the picture of nineteenth century Denmark there is a huge rock-like pre-world. This is the reason why Andersen has been able to conquer the whole globe from his native country. His tales contain palaces built by imagination—but built on rock. He has revived the lost age, the childhood we no longer remember. His poetic book of tales, first and foremost to Danes, but then to the whole world, is the key of a wonderland whose enchanted tracts look like those of the real world—only they are richer.

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THOUGHTS

C. E. SOYA

APHORISMS are like perfume: not too many drops at a time. It is incredibly easy to make aphorisms. One simply takes an old truth and says the opposite; and, lo and behold, one has a verity which is true, new and surprising.

There is nothing good that isn't bad for something.

It is ungrateful to round on your old gods because you have acquired new ones.

A standpoint is a dubious virtue. People are not meant to stand but to go.

The world has been so wisely ordered that children nearly always take the views that most annoy their parents.

Why have uniformity, when one of the joys of life is man's diversity?

There are two things that a man needs: solitude and companionship.

Existence without an enemy is like playing chess by yourself.

There are not only wolves in sheep's clothing but also sheep in wolves' clothing.

Is virtue a virtue if it sours the one who practises it?

Man is not good at forgiving. Least of all, the one he has wronged.

It's clever of you, prudent of your friend, cowardly of others.

Gradually, as a man grows older, he becomes better and better at making a speech—and worse and worse at knowing when to stop.

It galls me to know that I must leave the play without seeing how it ends.

It is generally the stupidest who know best.

Imagine a world in which there was no war, no risk of life and limb, no economic troubles; in which everyone had his own snug, well-defined quarters and invariably died of old-age; a world in which every day at fixed times you received

a due portion of your favourite food without inconvenience to anyone. Wouldn't that be an ideal world? Well, ask the animals at the Zoo.

Nothing is to be had except at a cost. We must learn to realize that the more elaborately society is planned the more tedious it becomes.

In world-politics the knave does far less mischief than the fool.

For many men morality is a thing they use when they want to look down on their neighbour.

The ethical level of all fighting is determined by the party which uses the basest weapons.

The adder is a most offensive creature. If you step on it, it bites.

A domestic who does her work well is far more estimable than a Minister who makes a mess of his.

The satirist and the doctor resemble each other in both working to deprive themselves of a living. For the present, however, they have nothing to be afraid of.

The supreme delight of your heart, or its deepest sorrow, is for others a mere topic for tittle-tattle.

Memory is an unreliable fellow, but a great artist.

Life and literature have this in common, that the more credible their mendacities the higher their repute.

Not one of his contemporaries realized that Shakespeare was Shakespeare.

There is nothing that increases an author's reputation so much as to stop writing.

Paper is a treacherous friend. I confide to it my most secret thoughts and most intimate feelings, and it babbles them out to all and sundry.

The laws of perspective do not apply to artists; the more they recede, the greater they become.

A bashful poet is a phenomenon comparable to a swimmer with hydrophobia.

Don't reproach a square for not being round, nor a truthful writer for not being elegant.

'One must resemble one's work,' said the author who wore his nails long.

When I read reviews of my books and plays, I always learn a great deal about the reviewer.

I have only once in my life done a piece of original thinking. It was during mathematics at school, and I expect it was wrong.

Only when my wife and children are asleep is it possible for me to tell them how fond of them I am.

The moment makes the murderer.

What is the use of conquest, if you don't know how to govern? (*Printed during the second world war.*)

When there is a war, the Muses are silent; when there is a dictator, they are strangled.

If you want to get on in the world, you should cultivate a weakness. Not one big enough to hamper you, but big enough for your fellow-men not to need to hate you for your infallibility.

Though beards are natural and to be clean-shaven is not, nothing looks so unnatural on the beach as a bearded man in bathing-drawers.

On a walking-tour—what is the good of the spirit being willing, if the feet are tender?

There is a type of villa which looks as if it had been specially designed as the scene of a murder by poisoning.

It takes more to understand an aphorism than to write it.

(*Translated by R. P. Keigwin.*)

THE BORDER OF LIFE

JOHANNES V. JENSEN

The following two prose-pieces are characteristic samples of what Johannes V. Jensen has termed 'myths'. In The American-Scandinavian Review, June-July, 1932, he has given a definition of the word 'myth' in these words: 'The novel is slow, more suited to the time of the mail-coach than to our hurrying epoch. Besides, it keeps to the surface and does not go to the root of things: it is a mirror of society rather than of nature. Whenever you return to a novel which you have laboriously read through before, it is in order to pick out certain passages that have remained in your memory: the characters and the plot do not hold your attention more than once.

'Leave out the plot, concentrate on those short glimpses of the essence of things that illuminate man and time, and you have the "myth", the name by which the present writer designates his shorter prose works.'

THERE are certain memories which do not seem to fit in with reality, even though they can be dated back to definite impressions, and which do not again come to life even if one returns to the places with which they are associated; they have a special inner meaning, worth more than all other memories. During a lifetime—what we call life—many other impressions may have been gathered and stored; nevertheless at the bottom, something remains, deeper and more important than all other experiences: an initial experience, irretrievably lost.

Indeed, such things cannot be told or described at all, by means of the spoken word, but it may be possible to write about them and thus get closer to the incidents surrounding them; there are probably some who may feel that a well-known chord has been struck inside them leading into the same deeply hidden world.

As to myself, it starts with a stream, a very ordinary stream as streams are in Denmark, and which by the way are not to be found in any other country that I know; the typical lowland stream which moves seemingly without flow; with many bends and sluggish widenings, muddy and ringed by

Yellow Flag, through miles of meadowland until at last it runs out in some low arm of a fiord. The stream I have in mind was really only the beginning of a stream; rather was it a kind of beck; it was, in fact, called Guldager Beck on the stretch which I knew. If one wishes to find it, it is there on the map, in the centre of Himmerland, somewhere between Nørager and Simsted, should that make anyone the wiser. I have seen it since; it is now almost overgrown, hardly a ditch, although a solid stone bridge with iron railings spans it still; underneath this bridge, where the roof consisted of long, heavy, cut boulders, and where there was Cimmerian darkness, lived *the white horse*—but no one speaks of that any more; I do not even know the bridge any more, and the stream is not the one I remember; no pilgrimage is possible to the land of childhood: like Atlantis it belongs to the vanished continents.

A short distance away from the bridge, on the slightly higher land above the stream, lay the small farm which went by the name of 'Wolle's Corner', and here lived my grandfather. Elsewhere I have told of him, and of the early childhood years I spent in his home. The earliest recollections of my life go back to impressions of the stream.

I have a quite definite recollection of the surface of the water. It seemed to be on a different level; one did not look down upon it, one looked along it, and it appeared to meet heaven and earth in a different way; that was, of course, because one was so small, and the water so much nearer; but it is not only a child's horizon that one loses and to which one can never again return; one can quite certainly no longer see with the eyes of a child.

During the summer the hay in the meadow was mown right down to the edge of the stream, and a tremendous woman, full of laughter, a deity by name of Gitte, walked on the water, as it seemed to me then; I suppose that what she did was simply, with the soles of her feet, to touch the surface of the water of the deep, dark pool, which was on a level with the grass, in the manner of girls, shuddering and daring to play with danger. The same Gitte shouted with joy and happiness in the meadow; and she would pivot around when

in the mood, so that her skirt, absolutely the one and only garment that she wore, swung out from her waist like the ring around Saturn; and while she pivoted she laughed, a tremendously strong laugh, which seemed to make the sunshine and the whole world shake.

Far away in the meadows on the other side of the stream, broad-striding figures went about with swinging movements from side to side; hefty young farm-workers in shirt sleeves who mowed the hay as if they were hugging and embracing the meadow itself in their progress. The wide-open day had much wonder and awe for the small child, planted conveniently in a haycock. The drawn-out lowing of a cow, from the heart of the meadows, resounded in the hillocks, and was like the voice of the day itself; as if the sun had spoken, the sunny, ringing voice of heaven. Never since has a summer day been so summery, nor the surface of the stream, on which were mirrored clouds and sky, so blue; never since has the smell of mud and water, plants and honey-sweet air been so near; it was life itself which was born in one single day.

Yes, here by the side of an unforgettable stream, the world was created.

From the farm on top by the hillocks, a small field sloped down towards the meadows and the stream. From here I have a memory, which has since in an odd way become twofold by being intermingled with what someone else, who had a similar recollection, has told me.

In May 1923 my father died, almost seventy-five years old, after having practised as a veterinary surgeon at Farsø for fifty-two years. He was born a few miles away at Guldager on the 5th June, 1848, and he spent his entire life within the same small circle on the Himmerland heath, from where his family came, and, as far as can be ascertained, where they have lived ever since the country became inhabited in olden times. His father, the weaver, was born at Hvam, not far from Guldager; the family came from Støttrup moor, a black, forbidding plain, marsh and sand, where even the heather will hardly grow; near here is Snæbum, with its big, two-chambered tumulus. To the unpractised eye the country hereabouts appears everywhere to be fairly uniform, flat like

a steppe, although lying relatively high, with mile-wide bogs and vales, with long black ridges between, and studded with tumuli: for the rest, wide open meagre farmlands with the farmhouses peculiarly scattered and widely dispersed. Near Aars there is a watershed from which the streams go out to the north, west, and south; it was near here that the Gundestrup kettle was found, and it is possible that the main seat and culture of the Cimbrians were here where all the waters meet; but any variation in the level of the countryside is hardly noticeable. Near the centre, where the streams branch out, there are long, flat stretches of bog, bare moors where the soil consists of iron sand in which only bell heather will grow; and reddish water in the unfertile marshland overgrown with cotton grass, all vegetation sparse and stunted, pressed low by the wind. But God's creatures must needs extract nourishment where they find it; my father had his character from the nature here; it was, in fact, the Himmerland flora, poor in growth, which interested him during his whole life; in the old-fashioned botanist's way, without any motive but to gather and determine the specimens; he left a complete *herbarium* of all the plants which grew in Jutland, a stack of paper containing dried and pressed plants to look after, but for him they had meant the joys of a whole lifetime, a thousand places, everywhere, in fact, where his work as a veterinary surgeon had taken him; all the summers of his life, the flowers of Himmerland, the essence of his nature.

Before he had begun to press flowers, he had made attempts at drawing all the local flora; this drawn *herbarium* still exists, and it must be said to have considerably more value than the dried plants.

An impression of my father as a botanist stays in the foreground of my memory amongst the pictures of my whole life, like the condensed essence of his character, in which he seems so near to me, although now for ever far away.

It is literally a picture in a circular frame, so to speak, and as if composed of light, for it was a situation actually seen through a telescope; I can see it still with the whole impression of the moment when it happened, although that moment lies as far back as forty years.

It was a still June day, with baking sunshine, such as can be experienced even in Jutland; a Sunday, the whole world crisp, freshly washed, and as if bathed in light; the countryside everywhere green, the fields like a sea of corn, the marshes pale green and dotted with black-and-white mottled Jutland cattle, as far as the eye could see; even the moor and the hillocks, otherwise so dark, were transfigured by the shimmering light from above; the far horizons were clear, as far as Rold wood, and the sky sheer light.

East of the town the marshes stretch for miles and out here by the peat bogs I noticed a white speck, a distinct white speck in the middle of all the green; it moved but one could not see what it was. I went into the loft where my father had a large telescope of his own construction standing, and directed it through the window in the roof towards the white speck.

It was my father walking around the marshes; I could get him quite near in the lens and saw that he was wearing his white coat, which meant that for him it was now summer; the coat blinded one like the fire in the sun, with blue shadows in its folds; he stood by some tall rushes and plants which hid him up to the waist, willow herb and tall grasses, and underneath his arm he carried his botanist's press of plaited wire; he was obviously busy determining a plant which he had just found.

As I saw him there, on that abundant day, alone and happily wrapt up in himself, in sunshine, under a broad sky, against a background visible for twenty or thirty miles, among the plants which he loved and studied, thus shall I always remember him. Yes, they were his best years; he was between thirty and forty at the time, in middle life; it was summer, and he was himself in the summer of his life, a close-knit, sturdy, hirsute man with hands more suited to a northern giant than to a man of his size. I have seen him hold a restive stallion by the nostrils; it flung back its head and lifted the veterinary surgeon completely off the ground and a couple of feet into the air, but he did not relinquish his grip and ended by making the stallion stand as quiet as a mouse; the steely grip, which squeezed the harder the longer, could not be shaken off. Once he got a purchase with the crook of his finger in the lower jaw of a calf, to which the cow was having

difficulty in giving birth—out came the calf! I remember his professional attitude, characteristic of him during the whole of his life, when he listened to a creature with his ear on its hairy flank, and one hand holding his cap, reaching over the back of the animal, the other supported against the knee; man and beast cast in one mould. He was a veterinary surgeon through and through.

But botany was his pleasure. The *herbarium* which he drew of the flora of Jutland and which I now have after him, is a memorial to his taste in flowers.

The plants, small and stunted as they are in the meagre meadows of Jutland, which are open to the wind, were very simply drawn, for his own pleasure, freely and without any pains. I remember his doing it. He would hold up the plant in front of him with one hand and draw with the other, quickly, straight down, with a fine pen, without corrections, in a flash. Afterwards he put on the colours, from an old paint box and bottled anilines; there were many attempts, not always equally successful, to hit the exact, natural colour; but as regards the drawing—that was the plant itself; as it looked to him, and as, indeed, it was.

There is the Yellow Toadflax, which together with *Verbascum* and Sea Pink, is characteristic of unfertile, sandy, and desolate parts near the coast, the varieties being especially small and stunted; there are not only all manner of Dandelions and *Helichrysum*, Flora's stepchildren, but also the same species as are known in full development in the Islands; but poorer in Jutland, half-grown, like offshoots of what becomes in other places luxuriant growth reaching full maturity. The drawings reproduce in a lively manner typical specimens of the struggling Flora of the country from which my father came, and are examples of his art.

The last time I saw my father was on his sickbed, which a month later became his deathbed.

My father was a declared enemy of Christianity; for a time he had been a spiritualist; but towards the end he said to me that he did not wish for another life; this one had been enough.

And, of course, his life had been long enough, and he

wished to add nothing to his fate. But he confided to me that the nights were long when he could not find sleep; he would then lie and think; and many memories would come to him from the time furthest back; things which during his life he had forgotten, but which now became as clear to him as if they had just happened, although they occurred seventy years ago, or more.

It was on an April day that I saw him for the last time; outside a strong wind blew, and whistled in the now so empty house, where eleven children had clattered through; the woodwork looked as if gnawed by beavers, the handles on all the doors as if wrenched and bent; I think that it was the night wind which carried memories over the far-reaching open land out there, where he had never owned anything but the vistas; a half-century of driving in all seasons, in all weathers; on a limited scale the same countryside embraced his childhood; here he had lived, and here it was now all going to end.

He told me of one thing, among all the others, that he remembered especially vividly, and on which he laid a strong, almost fearful emphasis; as if he were afraid of losing it, a memory from an age when he could hardly walk; it was one time when they harvested the field which slopes down towards the stream, at home at 'Wolle's Corner' at Guldager, where he was born.

They had made him a small 'house' in the stubble out of three sheaves placed together, and had planted him inside, and there he remained sitting and was safe while they cut the field and tied the sheaves. It was that which he lay there and thought about so vividly—the beginning of life, now that he had lived it out; his whole existence which had turned the full circle.

When one goes by a field at harvest-time, it often happens that one can see a tiny child planted away in the middle, guarded by a couple of sheaves; then the mother knows where to find it, and it sits there with a 'pap' in its hand, entertained alike by birds and flies; that is the picture as seen from the outside, as so many have seen it. My father had himself been so placed and remembered it, therefore, as with an inner eye.

But I myself have exactly the same memory and from the very same place! As a tiny tot I was staying with my grandfather; they were cutting the field which slopes down to the stream and they put me in a shelter of three sheaves which fitted around me like a small cave, and from which I could not wander; I was not big enough for that; and they gave me large, ripe seed-pods of the Corn Cockle to play with, full of mucilage and black, sharp seeds; marvellous things the grown-ups presented to one, and always with beaming faces.

Many different things from my earliest childhood in my grandfather's house have been told me by others. Things I cannot myself remember. Thus, once I had been lost; they searched for several hours and feared the stream, but at last found the young imp sleeping in the manger under the heads of the cows in the byre. At the time I must have been somewhat older; but of this adventure which had seemingly something exceptional, even 'thrilling', about it I retain not the faintest impression. What do we, in fact, remember, when fate has mown down that which was life? That one was once shot in the leg—that one bought a house? There are some who have completely forgotten persons with whom they have had love affairs; so little worth remembering is that which is commonly classed as 'intimate' living; the inner life makes itself felt in another way.

I am inclined to think that when an impression, such as that which my father and I have in common, is remembered above all others, then it is more than a memory; it is an inherited recollection, a bio-genetic experience, if you like; an inter-family contact which directs the imagination and invests certain impressions with a much higher import than do everyday casual happenings, however striking. Modern science speaks of this imperishable family tendency, the characteristics of which remain constant, whatever the outside influences may be. Is it then a kind of buried instinct which makes itself felt and which reacts to, and picks out, certain of one's experiences only?

For as long as tillers of the fields have harvested their corn, they have taken their toddlers with them into the field, to a place where they could be kept in sight, and with some gift

or other for comfort; grain, picked out of the head of corn and tasted for the first time; a flower to sniff, leaving pollen on the nose, with much enchanting byplay by the big ones, teaching one to sneeze and say Atishoo! Is it not still like that? The very first settlers who came sailing up the stream—did they not carry in the boat just such a bundle, which was carefully brought ashore and set on the greensward? A child with dewy eyes—did it not sit in the settler's first small field when it was mown, in a clearing in the wood between the stone walls?

My father had sat in such a field with a sugar sandwich in his hands, slightly inconvenienced by the sharp stubble, and tickled from behind by a straw; with his attention divided between an ant crawling on the ground and the wonder of heaven, the stream yonder, exactly as did his son later on; one of them around 1848-50—what a short space of time seen in perspective—the other a short quarter of a century later. The stream! It was as if one yearned for it with one's whole being; the water-lilies, with their green seed-pods bobbing on the water, the secretive surfaces of the pools, all the life which stirred in the stream and which one later learned to know better; the crawfish on the bottom, the fear of the stream, which the grown-ups did their best to imbue; the much-maligned, slandered by a thousand warnings, personified as a bogey; the stream, so sternly forbidden to one, which no power on earth could keep one away from. But all later experiences of the stream belong to another age, almost to another childhood, and are merely small personal memories.

One's earliest impressions are impersonal, like nature itself, without speech; just the wonder of being alive. They come back to me still, when I recall the day the rye was harvested in my grandfather's field; conceptions from the morning of life, not to be formulated, but nevertheless imperishable, deeper, and stronger than all other impressions. The things which are grasped by young and fresh minds cannot really be said to be remembered, but only recalled, as it were, caught up by the memory as a chord or a smell is caught. One never again sees water-lilies in a stream in

quite the same way as the very first time in early childhood; one never smells again a newly mown sheaf as one did the first time; there is only one first time.

Here by the border of Guldager Beck my father saw the heavenly light. And as an old man he lay during the long nights, when the wind whistled through the doors, and harkened back to the voices from the first dawn of his life, across the span of some seventy years, during which they had been buried beneath other of life's music. Is it then so, that only in a state of helplessness—as the child is helpless, tied to the spot, and as the old man is helpless, about to die, held fast, not the one who moves towards things, but the one to whom everything comes—is *that* the condition in which one sees, in which one's soul is fired, as sodium catches fire when placed on water? Well, one can have life in various ways. But one possesses it most fully when one is pure of soul, on the first and last stages of life's way, when all that one has carried about through the hard years, including one's supposed task, has been swept away.

The longed-for world towards which most human beings strive does not lie ahead in a future to come, nor even beyond this existence, as so many believe; any strivings towards other conjectured forms of existence are caused by a blunted, artificial, and hardened relationship towards life's realities. No, the life which one looks forward to, because one has missed it, points back towards the past, the world of the child. When one has lost it oneself, it is only in one's children that it is possible to rediscover it.

Such an inner, deep world, linked with the source of life, do I share with my dead father and, as I believe, with his forefathers; as long as men have sown the seed in the soil, and made a shelter of sheaves for the first-born, and shared smiles with a child over the gifts of the earth. At a still lower stage this instinctive perception can be said to belong to the beast.

It is a world which is more than a memory, the quintessence of a line, the innermost soul which permeates the whole of creation. This feeling, as long as it is treasured, seems to me to transcend both time and death.

(Translated by Lydia Cranfield.)

FUJIJAMA

JOHANNES V. JENSEN

THE happiest experience I ever had was at sea off Japan; I remember no real event since then. I woke up early in the morning, before sunrise, because the wind blew gently into the cabin, and because in my sleep I was so brimming over with joy that I could not remain lying there; and when I looked out of the open port-hole, high up in front of me was a sort of beautiful cloud—but it was not a cloud, it was Fujiijama.

The wonderful mountain towered above the whole world; did not seem to stand on the earth at all, for the mountain was so far away that its foot merged into the blue thickness that made the sky over Japan. But above the sky itself the white snow-cone of the mountain broke through the atmosphere, airy and light as a cloud, so that instantly I grasped both the vast density of the globe and its weightless flight in space.

It was just as if the earth itself had approached me in its cosmic freshness, the young planet spinning its way out of the darkness, crowned by the aurora borealis with its beautiful semi-blue sphere and the many-coloured soil of the continents lit up by the sun.

What I felt on that occasion was the same primitive experience which one can have as a child at the first sight of anything, a straw, a drop of rain on the window-pane. But afterwards when acquired ideas have made childhood the lost country and created illusions of another, nobler reality than the one we see, then a remoteness and strangeness, a sublime surprise, is necessary, to give back the earth its freshness.

When I saw Fujiijama it scattered my last illusions of another existence than the one which is. I understood that the higher world toward which we aspire can only be the one which *is*, but that we have never at the proper moment attained to it, that we are ordinarily blind to it. No more profitable thought exists. In fact, this is the only thing a man can experience.

JOHANNES V. JENSEN

Therefore Fujijama is a holy mountain, the object of the cult of a whole people.

Columbus! There is only one happiness which is eternal: to see again this blessed earth.

(Translated by Elias Bredsdorff)

HAZARD

by NIS PETERSEN

This deep of night, with nature's law complying,
myriads will have their unrequested birth,
and numberless battalions of the dying
with most unwilling footsteps leave the earth.

This deep of night shall know the dint of sorrow,
these stars be stormed with laughter and with glee;
in that fair cloak, enfolded for to-morrow,
lies hidden all that soon must be—must be.

Listen, my dearest, while the night grows older:
the rattling dice, the thrower's muttered call.
I only know your head is at my shoulder,
and that we are so small, so insect-small . . .

* (*The contributions by Nis Petersen appear by kind permission of Fru Petersen. The poem is translated by R. P. Keigwin and reprinted from 'The Jutland Wind' by kind permission of Mr. Basil Blackwell.*)

BEDSIDE PRAYERS

NIS PETERSEN

CARL Troestrup's walk in life was to bore wells for people, and when I met him he was doing some work in a small town on the railway line in the middle part of the county of Thy. We lodged at the same temperance hotel, and as is usual in such places we took our meals together at the same long table. In this case, however, he had been gone some time when I sat down to breakfast at 7.30 and, as he took his lunch with him to the place where he worked, we did not meet till dinner in the evening at 7. His men used to turn up first and usually had to wait a few minutes before he arrived. He was a man of middle height and his face was the colour of burnt coffee beans . . . a man of few words and equable temper, on whom even violent happenings obviously left no deeper impression than they would on a slice of bread; but at the same time he was a man who was in possession of a comfortable economical memory. This memory showed itself when an argument about details of some kind arose; he was then able to decide the matter with some polite and adequately formed remark. To this must be added that he had not only got his opinions uncorked for a quick decanting, but acted accordingly with a claim to be heard which was not only that of the silent man, but also that of the strong. Carl Troestrup was an exceedingly strong man and it was pleasant and edifying to see him at a table: there was no steak tough enough to baffle his teeth for any length of time. Nothing stupefied these unusual bone structures. If by some mistake the dish were to have carried a concoction of the straps that connect the swiple and handle of a flail, he would hardly have noticed it . . . it is certainly an open question whether he noticed what he put in his mouth at all. He gave the impression that he was the sort of man who brings a certain type of woman, the efficient, to the end of her resources, and makes others mention him as the prototype of the unpretending man.

In other respects, too, Carl Troestrup had a way of his own. He demanded cleanliness of his men; and, bearing in mind how completely worn-out workmen can be when their day is done, one can easily understand such a man not being able to resist the temptation to wash in a summary manner before he sat down to his meal. One of the first things I saw Carl Troestrup do was to fire one of his best men. This man turned up, free and easy, in torn trousers shiny with oil and mended in the most necessary places with nails and rubber patches; his shirt was in the same style, so that one would have thought he had been equipped by a stage manager. After a few requests to tidy himself up a bit before he sat down to a civilized meal, he received his last pay one rainy evening towards Easter, and he looked like a man who could not believe his own eyes.

As a rule we did not talk to each other; but it happened that the well-borer remained at the table after the men had gone outside to smoke a pipe or make up to the girls. On such occasions he used to go through his correspondence, put a mark here and a word there; his letters were sure to be the pattern of matter-of-factness and brevity just as he was himself. He smoked a cigar while he did this bit of work, and when he had finished, he gathered letters and papers together, uttered a short good night, and went to his room with his characteristic heavy gait. But before he went he would often start a short conversation about something he had on his mind . . . it was never about the wind, weather or the next holiday or the bad times. As far as he was concerned there was nothing to do for the salvage corps. One evening he surprised me by asking without any introductory remark: 'Have you at any time in your life said bedside prayers?'

A queer thing to ask an almost complete stranger. It had been my fate on several occasions during my innocent youth to cross the path of missionaries, who wanted to know if I was at peace with my creator; but Troestrup was not at all a missionary. So the question confused me a bit and I said: 'How do you mean—prayers?'

'Just that,' he said: 'Did you say your prayers as a child?'

Well, it was easy to give an answer to that: my brothers

and sisters and I had said bedside prayers, until the day it was left to ourselves to do it, until—at the age around twelve we did it less often and then stopped altogether, I told him.

‘What kind of prayer did you say?’ he asked, and as he really seemed interested, I answered: ‘We had a formula we stuck to in the main: it was about sick and sorrowful people, family and friends, whom we mentioned by name, those who were in prison or were to die the following night, “the starving millions of China” and other supposedly unhappy and lost heathen peoples like the Santals and the Afghans, and finally the royal family. The prayers always ended with the Lord’s Prayer, and in our tender years at least we sang the sweet little good-night song: “I know of a beautiful garden” . . . you know: “where roses bloom . . .”’

‘Were you happy as a child?’ he went on, and when I answered shortly and in the affirmative, because a child certainly never feels happy in the sentimental way, he nodded and said: ‘I too was happy until I was fourteen . . .’

Human beings are funny in many ways. If somebody says to them: but you must be able to tell about at least one strange or touching or thrilling experience from your childhood, one can rest assured that one doesn’t get even one trite little story out of them; but if one gives them time, a week or a fortnight and watches them patiently without any direct approach, it will come by itself almost without failure. There was no doubt about the well-borer’s intention: he was about to tell the story of his life.

But it was hard for him to get started. First he had to ring for cigars, and then he had to go out . . . unfailing symptoms, characteristics, without which the story would have been incomplete. However, in due course he sat down again, looked at his hands, which were chapped all over and as tough as pigskin, and cleared his throat. When he spoke his voice faltered at the start and the words came abruptly; but he soon mastered it, and, when he had finished, it was evident that he was satisfied with himself and had succeeded in telling the most important things. He said:

‘Perhaps you heard me saying that I was happy until I was fourteen years old. It must sound strange to you that one

can give the exact date for that sort of thing; but when I have told you what happened then, you will understand. As no doubt you will have guessed, I grew up in the country; but, like myself, my father was a well-borer and on account of that away from home for weeks at a time, even if he did his best to be home during week-ends. The place we had wasn't bigger than could be managed with the help of an old farm hand, a boy and a girl, and after I had left my boyhood behind me, I found out that he had been keeping it for my sake. It was one of his ideas that children should grow up in contact with nature, and that is my idea too; I have a small property myself. The relationship between my father and my mother was of the most touching kind, and I don't think he ever returned without bringing her some small present or other . . . often just trifles, but now and then things for the house or silk shawls and suchlike, which beautiful women admire, because they make them still more beautiful. And my mother was really a beautiful woman, as everybody admitted. On account of that, in spite of my father not being very well-known in the parish, because of his business, we were much asked out; but mother rarely went without father, so the parties were mostly in wintertime. I should emphasize that it was not because my father wanted it that she did not go out; it must either have been that she did not want to go out, or that she stayed home from a kind of fellow-feeling.

'In this way my relationship with my mother naturally became very close, and I venture to say that in the two years after I had completed my twelfth year, we were like a devoted sister and brother . . . a trite phrase, but all the same. . . . We gathered mushrooms and herbs; we worked in the garden; we built castles in the air together;—and when I prepared my lessons it was not as if she were helping me, but as if she were preparing them for herself, because she too was going to be examined the next day . . . and maybe that was her feeling. Moreover, we said our bedside prayers together . . . up to my fourteenth year, and it stopped at a blow. But then everything else stopped at a blow, too.'

Though the well-borer must have been a man of about forty, and the thing that happened might well have been

partly blotted out from his memory by now, it was painful to see how hard it was for him to master his feelings. However, after a pause he continued.

"The thing that happened was terrible enough in itself to give a horrible blow to our small and intimate society; but it was these bedside prayers that made it unbearable and turned it into a crime. No doubt you know the song "I close my eyes" . . . which ends up with the lines "from danger, sin and sorrow, safeguard me till the morrow, O angel who guided my feet today". A hundred times . . . many hundreds of times I had said these lines, and always laid down afterwards with the feeling that I had invincible guardians outside my door and windows . . . and when everything went to pieces, it was as if this guard had been withdrawn for ever and I had been left to my own frailty and powerlessness. But let us go back to what happened. Before my father left for his work—often far away in the most remote parts of the country—he sometimes jokingly said to my mother that she must be careful with men, for it was a well-known fact that where a pretty young wife was alone at home, the fearless pioneers of love were not far off . . . as certain as the pope goes to paradise. When he talked like that, my mother used to straighten herself up and say that they could come if they liked, it was not always fun to lie alone for weeks and listen to the wind in the poplars outside one's window. Then they both laughed, and afterwards she said that she had me and the dog and that she could never wish for better guardsmen.

"Quite right, and you have Jens too," he said. Jens was our old farm hand, and they had often discussed the question of installing a bell in his room next to the stable; but every time it had been given up, because mother said that he was just as likely to be in the maid's room, if he was wanted, so we would have to have a connection there too. Then they laughed again, and father started his motor-cycle and drove out of the place, while mother followed him with her eyes, because she knew that he would turn round and look back, when he came as far as the bridge across our small river.

"The spring when I completed my fourteenth year was more eventful than any other before it; even then I do not count

the fact that I got into the next-highest form at school, which was rather good because I had a cycle-ride of an hour and a half to get to school and back again and had various duties at home besides the voluntary work I did with mother. To begin with Jens shot a screech-eagle and had to pay a fine, which mother did without telling anybody because father maintained that one shouldn't encourage people to violate the laws. This was the view he took, and it was perhaps a view we did not appreciate sufficiently until it was too late. It was very characteristic of him, once . . . I had solemnly promised mother ten young pigeons for her birthday, which came very early in the year, and, when I climbed up to feed them for the last time the day before, they had all gone except two, which were lying dead in the dovecot. Before I mounted my bike to go to town, where I knew I could get the necessary number, I told the farm hand to keep quiet about it, which of course he did not do, so when I returned home late in the evening, mother had coffee and apple-dumplings ready for me, and she gave me a kiss and said that she was proud that her son made it a question of honour to keep his word. . . . "What do you say?" she asked my father. He did not answer at once, but shortly after he said: "In my home we were not commended for keeping our word." The remark made my mother angry, and as he turned towards me and said: "Isn't that right, Carl?" I said yes; but I didn't mean it.

'Many strange things happened that spring: one of our horses ran wild and broke through the railings and fell into the river . . . he was an extraordinary good old horse with a light-coloured mane and we had had him since I was born; we missed him fearfully . . . and the bees were swarming incessantly from the early spring, and when at last they settled, we had only half of ours left. Everything was bewitched, or that is how it appears to me now. . . . And then my uncle Polycarp, father's brother, began to visit us at short intervals. Perhaps it was really he who made us feel our usual surroundings as something strange and hectic. My uncle Polycarp was as different from my father as a rooster from a drake. While father was calm and thoughtful and honest, almost unnaturally so, the opposite was the case with his brother. Being

together with him gave one the feeling of being in the company of an advertisement for fruit-salts. He was always pre-occupied with something or other, always full of stories and completely unreliable. Father had it in his power now and then to make him keep a little nearer to the truth . . . and my uncle Polycarp promised to do so, but added that there was that advantage when one told the truth that one did not have to remember what one had said . . . and at the very moment he was head-over-heels in a new story about the time when he had travelled in Iceland and been so ill that he had tried to write his will on a dried codfish. Or some nonsense still worse than that. At such moments father shook his head and went out, and mother laughed and said he would never be wise; but she thought it fun all the same, and maybe she thought secretly that it would not have been so bad if father had had a touch of uncle Polycarp's humour.

'By and by the misfortune came. As it had happened so often before, father was going away to do some work, which would keep him away from home for the rest of the week, and he had hardly left when uncle Polycarp drove into the yard, which puzzled and surprised us all, because he had been to see us a week before. At that time he was going about selling seeds to those of the bigger farms that were so provident as to be three quarters beforehand, and he had said that he had "vacuumed" these parts, meaning that he had finished. Well, he was always welcome, and I remember that we went for a walk, the three of us, in the little grove at the bottom of our garden. In other circumstances I should hardly have remembered what we talked about; but the event that followed made everything stand out very sharply. Several times during the walk mother and uncle were just about having an argument, and I thought: Isn't it a pity that he should come and spoil our evening. It was a lovely little grove, our grove, even if it was not a proper grove . . . even if the trees were just garden-trees, they were trees all right, and it was good to walk among them, though there wasn't much room. That's why I noticed that uncle several times tried to take my mother's arm, and that she withdrew her arm each time. Once they were especially near having

a quarrel because he had said some silly, flattering words to her, and mother said to him very sharply: "I know the kind of man you are—don't you realize that? You are the kind that asks married women if they haven't a younger sister who is like them. We have heard about Mary"—something-or-other which I didn't catch, and he laughed at it; it amused him. Later, on the way home, mother said that once there were things that people could not talk about, but that now, thanks to men like Polycarp, they could hardly talk of anything else. If he had not laughed before, he did it now, and he said: "You just simply love to talk about it" . . . but to this mother answered: "You are wrong there, my fine fellow, and the least you can do is to keep your mouth shut, while the boy is here." That hurt me, for I was fourteen and thought I knew all the things one did not talk about. Luckily I found out later on that I had been wrong.

'During our walk a heavy storm had been brewing, and just as we were entering the garden-room door, Providence put the country to soak, as Polycarp said, and after having looked after the cattle, I said good night and went to bed.

'What comes now can hardly be told, and yet it helps me in a way if I talk about it to somebody. I woke up in the middle of the night with a feeling that there was something wrong, and immediately after I heard noises and shouts coming from my parents' bedroom downstairs. Shivering I dressed myself and ran downstairs. What a sight! In my father's bed uncle Polycarp was lying mutilated most terribly, blood streaming down his face, and my mother was pacing the floor, wailing as I have never heard anyone wail before. Like Polycarp, she was in her night things, and it was clear that she had been lying in the bed beside him, when the assault had taken place. Because soon it became clear that thieves had broken in and assaulted Polycarp, believing him to be my father.

'Just imagine a boy of fourteen in such a situation. . . . Mother kept moaning: "Poor Carl, my poor Carl, what will become of us all—and father—poor father."

'Eventually the farm hand, Jens, stood in the door. He was old and did not know what to do, but by and by he telephoned

for help, something I had not had the courage to do, because my young brain was busy trying to find a way to get us all out of this terrible situation without too much harm.

'I did not go to school the following days, but one day I was sent for in the fields; my father had come home and wanted to speak to me. When I entered the room my mother was lying across the long dining-room table, her head resting on her arms; that table where we had all our meals together with the servants. She kept repeating: "Hit me, why don't you hit me. Beat me, kill me. What have I to live for after this?" But father spoke calmly, almost as he used to speak. "Did you say your prayers with the boy, before you went to bed?" he asked, and mother wailed: "Oh, I did, yes I did. I think I did."

"Don't tell me you think you did," father said in an admonishing tone, and mother said that she did.

"Also the last lines?" he went on, and when mother did not answer, he repeated the question more loudly. Mother answered once more that she had said it all . . . also the last lines.

"Also: from danger, sin and sorrow, safeguard me till the morrow, O angel who guided my feet to-day? . . . Also those lines?" His voice had a tone as if he hoped that she had omitted those lines; but mother answered with a nod of her head. His face looked so queer . . . pale I think . . . it is difficult to say, because the colour of his face was brown like mine now . . . and he said hoarsely: "Before . . . you infest our house, you pray with him . . ."

That was all he said. He lifted his hand as if he was going to hit her; but I was quicker. I hit him in the face with my fist, and then I ran out, desperate . . . out of the farm . . . along the road . . . away . . . and I was not caught and sent home till four days after.

'I did not go to school any more,' said Carl Troestrup quietly. 'For a couple of years I was apprenticed to a smith, and then I became a well-borer. It is a good profession; it gives a man his bread; good well-borers are always wanted. They'll never do without us until no more people are left.'

(Translated by G. Reesen)

A SCENE FROM "HEROD THE KING"¹

KAJ MUNK

[Herod with ruthless consistency sacrifices everything to the one idea that possesses him: retention of the crown to which (in the words of Salome, his sinister hunchback sister) he has murdered and cheated and begged and bludgeoned his way. A year before this scene opens, Herod, on a trumped-up charge, has flung his beautiful wife Mariamne into prison; recently a Court has been conducting her trial. As the curtain rises, HEROD is sitting alone in the throne-room at Jerusalem by the light of a single torch, awaiting the result. His old servant, MENAHEM, comes in.]

MENAHEM: Your Majesty—the President of the Court.

HEROD: H'm.

ZEPHANIAH (*coming in with two Jews*): Your Majesty, may the Most High bless and preserve—

HEROD: The verdict!

ZEPHANIAH: Your Majesty, here is the verdict: Mariamne, daughter of Alexander, son of Aristobul, son of John, son of Simon, son of Matthias, Queen of Israel, in the charge of infidelity brought against her by her royal husband, King Herod, ruler of the Jews, friend of the Romans, has in each instance been found not guilty . . .

HEROD: Not guilty?

ZEPHANIAH: . . . by thirty-five of the judges, whereas her guilt is held by thirty-six of the judges—

HEROD: Thirty-seven.

ZEPHANIAH: Excuse me, sir—at the final expression of opinion, the President abstained from voting.

HEROD: Then there is a majority of one for the verdict of guilty? As the executive servant of the law, what penalty am I in duty bound to inflict in accordance with *your* verdict?

¹ This is the next-to-last scene from the unpublished acting version.—
EDITOR

A SCENE FROM "HEROD THE KING"

ZEPHANIAH: In the case of proved infidelity, the law stipulates the death-penalty. But, coupled with the verdict, by the unanimous vote of the whole tribunal, there is an earnest plea for clemency.

(HEROD signifies that they are to withdraw. ZEPHANIAH and the two Jews go out.)

HEROD: Menahem! How many are waiting?

MENAHM: The vestibule is quite full, your Majesty. And in the darkness outside—

HEROD: Is Queen Alexandra there?

MENAHM: No, the Queen Mother is not there, sir.

HEROD: Well, begin with the Pharisees. Quick.

ZACHARIAS (coming in with two PHARISEES): Your Majesty, it is a long time since you declared war on Heaven. There it rested. But if you flout the Lord's sacred claim to Justice and carry out this sentence to-night, you will open the war. Blasphemous war against God.

(At a sign from HEROD, they withdraw.)

JOSEPH (coming in with ZEBULON): Gracious lord, we are poor Essenes. Our lives are all that we possess.

ZEBULON: We offer them to you, your Majesty. Mariamne—

JOSEPH: Queen Mariamne—

ZEBULON:—has been so good to us. We have young women who offer to die in her place.

HEROD: H'm. (He signs them to go.) Menahem! Is Queen Alexandra still not there? Not yet. The next then . . . Nicolaus.

(NICOLAUS, Herod's Greek secretary and old schoolfriend, comes in.)

NICOLAUS: Herod, you promised me to live and atone. Is this how you atone? If this sentence is carried out, then may I be cursed for not killing you when you asked. If Mariamne is in any way guilty—and who knows even that?—surely she has been punished enough . . . shut up for nearly a year in a dungeon, kept away from her children on a horrible charge that has been blazoned out over the country—horrible, if it's true, and a thousand times more horrible, if it's a trumped-up lie. This sentence will also be the death-blow to our friendship. Carry it out, and I shall wander homeless out

into the world and wherever your name is mentioned, I can only answer: 'Herod a Hellene? Herod a King? No, he's a dog—a blood-licking dog!'

(HEROD *motions him out.*)

HEROD: Who is that? Is it—

(SPATOLIUS *is borne in on a litter.*)

SPATOLIUS: Yes, it is I—Spatolius. I, too, have had them bring me here to ask what this all means. Will you sacrifice your wife on the mere suspicion of a little adventure, a passing fancy? I remember Mariamne, from my last visit here four years ago; I couldn't believe my own ears, when I came back again the day before yesterday, and heard how things stood. Promise me not to lay hands on your wife. Promise me that—and I'll go home.

HEROD: H'm.

SPATOLIUS: Come, Herod, do you know who is speaking to you? It is I, Spatolius, merchant, Roman, creditor of the Emperor. I'm not to be answered with a grunt. Do you imagine I have ruined a night's rest in order to be made a fool of by a vassal of Rome? I'm not joking. If anything happens to Mariamne, you will no longer be Cæsar's friend. (*To his bearers.*) Away! (*He is borne out again.*)

HEROD: H'm. . . . Let me be alone. . . . Menahem, tell the executioner to hold himself ready. I'll see nobody else—unless Queen Alexandra. . . . (*He motions to MENAHEM to withdraw and sits brooding.*)

MENAHEM (*as he goes to withdraw*): Your Majesty—

HEROD: At last—

MENAHEM: Your Majesty's sister.

HEROD: My sister? Well, well, (*resigned*) let her come in then.

SALOME (*entering*): My dear brother, is it true what I hear about the death sentence?

HEROD: Yes.

SALOME: Is it also true that—that you propose to carry it out?

HEROD: Yes.

SALOME: Don't do it, Herod, don't do it.

HEROD: You—the same as the rest!

A SCENE FROM "HEROD THE KING"

SALOME: We shall have to stop some time. We shan't be able to wash the blood off our hands; we shall scrub the skin off, and then we shall come to our own blood. You know well enough those were lies I told you about her—you were a means to cool my burning hatred.

(HEROD turns his head impatiently away.)

SALOME: Take care, Herod. You will go off your head, if you kill her; Jahvé will drive you mad. For Jahvé is just; his love is for the pure. And Mariamne is pure.

(ALEXANDRA, the queen-mother, comes in.)

HEROD: Queen Alexandra! Salome, you may leave us. (*She goes out.*) You, too, seek audience of me to-night.

ALEXANDRA: Yes, the time has now come for me to take action. I hold my daughter's fate in my hands. The decision as to what shall happen to her to-night is with me.

HEROD: Indeed!

ALEXANDRA: You are a strange man, King Herod. United in your person are the wildest passion and the shrewdest cunning. You are savage like Esau and subtle like Jacob.

HEROD: . . .

ALEXANDRA: That is why you never act like others. When you do a thing, you go to such extremes that you do the opposite of what you intend. With you, deference means domination, truth means dissembling; inclination is torment, caresses are blows.

HEROD: . . .

ALEXANDRA: You love Mariamne; therefore you hate her. You believe in her fidelity; therefore you condemn her for adultery. You long to embrace her living body, and so you are going to bury a headless corpse.

HEROD: . . .

ALEXANDRA: And yet you would do nothing of all this, if you hadn't worked out by cynical calculation that you stood to gain by it. Once in the first glow of falling in love, you wooed our charming little Princess and pledged yourself in a prudent betrothal to this daughter of Maccabees. Yet never was a woman less suited to a man than she to you. That she should love you directly she saw you—that I could understand. It

made her happy to be plucked by you like a flower, but not to be thrown in the dust and trampled under foot at every turn; she never understood that your way of loving *had* to be like that. And so—how she suffered! Suffered as only you and I can endure suffering, not the tender little flower that she was. For the truth of it all is this: Mariamne, as a wife, is not worthy of you; she's too little, too commonplace, too insignificant for a nature like yours.

HEROD: H'm. A mother's funeral speech over her daughter. Little—commonplace—insignificant! . . . Mariamne, that dew-pearl in the morning sun—that smile in the eyes of the Lord God!

ALEXANDRA: And so I have come here to-night, not to plead but to command. I tell you, King Herod, it is enough; my daughter shall suffer no longer. I thought myself of taking her life, but I found that I could not. Now I don't need to; I keep a slave to do it for me. I command you, Herod, to kill my daughter to-night.

HEROD: Queen Alexandra, you are bending your bow too far.

ALEXANDRA: Then let it break! I gave her life, I demand it again of your hand; I bore her for this earth, not for hell. It's time to make an end.

HEROD: You are playing a devilish game with me this night. But you shall not win it; I'm too clever and too strong.

ALEXANDRA: The Lord God in His wisdom has contrived that you should meet one cleverer than yourself. Salome's tales about Joseph were of course sheer insanity, which only the insane could believe. But whether my daughter, in spite of her love for you, at length—tired out by your inconstant moods—once in the warmth of her nature turned towards . . .

HEROD: Go, Alexandra! Go, I tell you!

ALEXANDRA: Daren't you hear me out, Herod?

HEROD: I have requested you to go.

ALEXANDRA: I am not to say it, then? No, not to say it. But I *could* speak; for this is something that is known to me—and to her—and to no other living person. But the doubt, the uncertainty—that is yours, King Herod. You forgot that in your calculations. Doubt will gnaw and rankle in your brain,

A SCENE FROM "HEROD THE KING"

till at last, maybe, your crown will topple after all. This is the weapon that will bring me victory: your uncertainty. Kill her to-night—and it will never leave you. For I shall say no more. (*She goes out.*)

HEROD: H'm. . . . Menahem, send for the executioner, and have the Queen brought up here.

MENAHEM (*throwing himself at HEROD's feet*): No, no, spare me that, your Majesty, spare me that. Cut me down with your sword—let me die.

HEROD: Menahem, fetch the Queen.

MENAHEM: Oh, but—not to her death, not to the headsman—not that!

HEROD: Menahem, go to your house.

MENAHEM: My Lord and Master.

(MENAHEM *goes out.*)

(MARIAMNE comes in with the EXECUTIONER and his men.)

HEROD: Greetings, my wife, greetings. Do you see those men there? They are the servants of justice. To-night, if I sign this, they will deliver you to death. And I *shall* sign it.

MARIAMNE: My Lord will do as he thinks right.

HEROD: You're a true Maccabean—resigned and spiritless. Have you no fear at all at the thought of death?

MARIAMNE: Zacharias has strengthened me in the belief that angels will carry me to Abraham's bosom.

HEROD: Abraham's bosom—oh well, he must be quite old. While that fawning Pharisee was telling you his lies, why didn't he promise you Kostobarus's bosom? . . . You're turning so pale, my dear—are you frightened after all? Have you any wish, before it is too late?

MARIAMNE: The children—not with my mother—she will teach them to hate you . . . Herod, my husband, be kind to them—don't tell them anything bad about me.

HEROD: The children—your children—let Salome bring up this Jewish-Maccabean brood, if it refuses to die out . . . As for me—I shall marry the daughter of King Aretas and let her children inherit my throne. She is young and beautiful—as you were those many years ago when I loved you. And so

KAJ MUNK

arewell, profaner of the Temple, who sullied a heart that was decked as an altar to you. There was a King in Judah to whom God grudged His throne. Daily he sent him an evil spirit to torment him into abdication. But Saul was a weakling and I am strong. I send that spirit back to the hell whence he fetched it up. . . . Executioner, take this adulteress out. Go, and report to me when the law has been satisfied. Go!

(MARIAMNE *is led out by the* EXECUTIONER. THE KING *stands erect, with pupils dilating and face grown very pale.*)

EXECUTIONER (*returning*): It is finished.

(HEROD *falls prone to the ground.*)

CURTAIN

(*Translated by R. P. Keigwin*)

WAITING

ELSA GRESS

JUST an ordinary night—a night of waiting. Eleven o'clock. No reason yet to be really nervous. He had said half-past ten, of course, but that meeting had probably been delayed. If only he had not been in that very tense state when he left, I should not have thought about the time at all, but should have lain down quietly on the couch with some book, until he turned up. He would come into the small room, his coat dripping with rain, and would sit down on the edge of the couch, relating incidents and asking advice. 'Don't you think there was nothing else to say about that? You ought to have heard Peter, that perfect little nuisance, walking about with a Commisar in his stomach and thinking he has got a say anywhere. I made him shut up for once, though. And the rest of the gang for that matter. Had to go off the deep end. I put on my inquisitorial face and set to asking them one by one what they were actually doing when I was not after them. Some of them seem to think it's enough to carry a gun in some improbable place and firing it now and then. Distributing papers and organizing things isn't good enough for those chaps. Then I saw to it that something gets done in the Haller business, he must have learnt to take care of himself by now, mustn't he? Ebba came up to ask if she could be packed off for Sweden, her husband is over there, you know, and they have been in the flat after him twice, and she is expecting a baby, and—well, anyway, she looked so sweet I couldn't deny her anything—tears quivering in her eyelashes and all that. Helmer was there, just arrived—you know that kid's amazing, barely nineteen and all that go and courage. You just sit there looking at him and feel that it's worth living after all. Has his brother called up by the way? I must get hold of him to-morrow. Lots of things to do to-morrow. You will have to go around a bit.'

He would go on talking like that, and I would lie very still,

watching him, and only putting in some sensible-sounding comment now and then. The desire to stroke his hair would increase until I would give in to it. He would bend down and kiss me then—gently at first, then greedily, with his eyes shut tight. He always shut his eyes, when he kissed—because he wouldn't give himself wholly away, he said. It didn't help him much, though. He always gave the whole of himself in his caresses, as he did in his work. His hands would touch my face—his long, expressive hands—his lips would seek my neck and shoulder, and I would feel a rich thankfulness filling me—thankfulness at having him with me.

Or I might pretend to be asleep when I heard the door creak. Then he would tiptoe to the couch, and stand looking down at me, touching my hair and cheek ever so lightly, letting his hand slip along my arm, whispering my name insistently till I woke up. Or he would place one knee on the edge of the couch, aim his revolver at me and growl *Sicherheitsdienst*, and I would start and look wide-eyed into the barrel of the gun and into his smiling eyes. With his thirty-one years and for all his sense of responsibility, he was not too old to take pleasure in that sort of boyish trick.

I had to smile at the thought, and sat for some time, letting my fingers move listlessly over the roller of the typewriter. Then I pulled myself together and wrote quickly the last lines of the article I was doing. I rose and stood for a moment listening to the rain that lashed against the panes. Cold winter rain. Copenhagen, December, 1944. Sixth year of the war. Almost five years of occupation. The brain mechanically kept account of time and as mechanically registered the immense losses of human lives and values throughout the world. But apart from a vague, if unceasing, feeling of indignation, one's emotional radius was gradually shortened so as to reach only the people that were closest to one. These people, on the other hand, were objects of the more intense feelings, and the increasing uncertainty and insecurity made their presence more precious and their absence more unbearable than ever before.

If only he had not taken all that coffeein before he went! He could not go through a whole night without some stimulant

I knew, but six tablets were too much. It was bound to return with a vengeance somehow, sooner or later. If he broke down on the way, as he had done a month ago, when he had fainted on a tram with his pockets full of compromising papers and had only by sheer luck been picked up by the right sort of people. To-night he wouldn't carry papers, but the gun, of course, would be enough to doom him, if he met with a German patrol.

Half-past eleven—oh, there might be a lot of things that might cause an hour's delay. It wouldn't do to start worrying, before it was strictly necessary. You know that so well, and yet—

No, it was no good sitting back with nothing to do. I decided to lie down and if possible to read a bit. I took up Saroyan's *Human Comedy*, which had just arrived illegally from Sweden, and turned the leaves. You had to be something as remote as an American living in the U.S.A. to retain that feeling of the innate solidarity of all men, I thought, after reading a sentence here and there. Even the casualties would become something cleanly remote and rather abstract over there. With Gestapo at close quarters and foreign uniforms in the streets it was no easy job to keep up an attitude of charity and humaneness towards each and all. You had to leave that to the outsiders, and there were few of those, these days. The process of brutalizing, which had gone on for years now everywhere in the belligerent or occupied countries, was not less grim because you were yourself influenced by it, so that you had come to consider it natural. Men had learned to hate these years—even the poor haters. But perhaps that was in itself not wholly bad. 'The great hatred is the shadow of the great love—'

Literary platitudes! I let the book sink into my lap, wondering at the picture of myself as a young girl—quite an intelligent girl taking a great interest in a lot of things, even a courageous girl in some ways, people used to tell me, but after all rather priggish and apt to sit back and meditate, to get philosophical about things instead of doing them. To me, as to the rest of my generation of intellectuals, the war had put an end to many hopes and dreams—not at one blow, but gradually.

One hardly knew oneself any more—didn't seem to be the same person. One did not go about criticizing life any more—one was being criticized by it. Though barely twenty-six I was not young anymore. There was something almost comical in the thought, but that didn't make it less real.

I took up the book once more, but in a few minutes my thoughts started wandering again, though I tried hard to keep them on what I was reading. Ward off the anxiety, think, read, don't give in—it won't help anybody to give in—don't look at the watch—don't look—

But I had to look. Even if it were twelve. It could not be twelve—must not be. I closed my eyes and gathered all my strength to turn my head and look. Two minutes to twelve. It might be too fast, there might be a few minutes left, if—

A clock somewhere in a neighbouring flat struck twelve—twelve exasperatingly, despairingly, heart-breakingly slow strokes. A hope that had not quite become a hope was shattered and hacked to pieces by those strokes. 'If I am not back by twelve, I shall at the least be shot.' He had said that as a joke when he kissed me good-bye at five. The daily joke that might at any moment turn into bloody reality. I might as well give up trying to fool myself any longer. I knew what was coming now. It was hopeless to fight against it.

I discovered that I had for some time been staring at letters that made no sense to me. 'If I am not back by twelve—'

Three weeks ago—three eventful, tense weeks, each as long as a year—I had, on an inexplicable impulse, gone back to our old flat which neither of us had visited since the house raid six months ago and had found him lying unconscious on the couch in a small room at the back of the house. There was an empty bottle of veronal tablets on the stool beside the couch. Some terrible seconds passed till I heard Eric's voice on the phone, endless minutes had dragged on while I struggled with the lifeless body, till Eric came and set to, working with his sure and swift doctor's hands. We could not take him to a hospital for fear of the *Hippos* but Eric had managed to bring him round somehow, and in the evening I sat holding his hand, while he had tried to explain in a weak, broken whisper.

'I felt so lonely and desperate—I couldn't stand it—and

then the pain came and broke me—I knew I must not fail you or the others, but I couldn't stand it—I was so tired I could hardly drag myself along—I didn't think I was any use that way—you were not there, I couldn't get hold of you—I thought it might be better for you too, to get rid of me, if it should go on like that—it would have been better to use the revolver, but I wouldn't do that, they are scarce enough anyway—I left it with Paul.'

I pushed the damp hair back from his forehead and talked to him—soothing, meaningless words—as one would to a sick child, and he fell asleep at last with the ghost of a smile hovering at the corners of his beautiful mouth, the curves of which I always loved to follow with my finger. The next day he was to have an interview with a very important member of the resistance movement, he had to go there, dead or alive, and I supported him, while he tried to shave, swaying back and forth like a drunken man, and cutting one gash after another in his greyish pale, deadly tired face, where the eyes shone unnaturally large and dark. He said, 'I am a bit giddy still,' in that way that made one want to go to the end of the world to help him. 'We will have to manage somehow, the two of us,' I said, trying to sound encouraging, and he turned to me and kissed me without regard to the fact that soap and blood was smeared all over both our faces. Thomas, of course, turned up at that very moment, square and jovial. 'Goodness, what a brick in the hat,' he chuckled. 'You had better wash it off, before we get going.'

We didn't disillusion Thomas or prevent him from telling the others of it during the next days. An active illegal worker ought, of course, not to be given to drink, but nobody would take offence, if he 'relaxed' now and then, when not on duty. Attempt at suicide on the other hand—but only Eric and I knew the truth, and our knowledge was not extended to others. He pulled himself together admirably and had more things to see to than ever. But he needed more stimulants than before, and he awoke more often at night, haunted by hallucinations, which he described so vividly that I would think I had them myself. I had had a long talk with Eric, who said that the boy's nerves were in a bad state and

wouldn't be better as long as he had to do underground work. You could only hope for him, as for everybody, that it would all end before long. When that happened we must go straight off to some place where we could have a long rest.

Oh, God yes—rest and peace and good books and music—.

'If I am not back by twelve—.' And there was nothing to do, nowhere to go, nothing but waiting, waiting—.

I closed my eyes and drew the blanket up to my chin, lay without thinking, and felt the silence grow denser around me. If only anxiety could be kept at a distance, together with thought—but no, it would creep into the mind, filling the brain as an ever-expanding painful emptiness, which was worse than any bugbear conceived by the liveliest imagination. I lay staring up at the ceiling, and quite unconsciously my lips began to form words, the same words, over and over again.

Let me have him back—let me have him back—let me have him back—.

I had cried it out loud the last time and was startled by the sound of my own voice. A sudden feeling of shame drove the blood into my cheeks. Wasn't it a prayer? I didn't believe in prayers, and still I had been praying, without knowing why, and without having a faith or the hope of one. To seek faith was like looking for a pair of strong glasses you have lost: in order to find it, you had to have it. To whom was I praying, anyway? To some divine power, who had to hear all those who were waiting like myself this night—many of them in vain—.

Oh, it wasn't a question of believing or not believing at all. You prayed because you were helpless, because you had to, because you could do nothing else. I turned, pressing my face against the pillow and gave way without restraint. 'Let him come back—unhurt—or just alive—let me have him back, ill, mutilated, blind—anything except insane—you can't love a man without a human mind—yes, you can—let him not die—he mustn't die—let me see him again, just once, just to-night—.'

My face twisted as if I were in pain. Something stung and burned behind my eyes, but no tears would come. I felt immensely tired all of a sudden, and seemed to have no will at all. I knew that tiredness from other times, when I had

waited, but it had never seemed so irresistible, so overwhelming before. Even if he were carried into the room now, dead or dying, I should not have been able to move or feel or think. Death in itself was not so terrible, either. We had often enough had it at close quarters, and had talked about it as a last escape. But one dead and the other living—that was a terrible thing, the point where all thought stopped and the darkness began—

. . . I sat up suddenly, staring dazedly at the little lamp on the table by the couch. I must have been dozing—how long? It was twenty past three. If anybody had called up in the meantime, if he had tried to get a message through . . . and I had been asleep—asleep—that cursed body, demanding food and rest whatever happened? I got up stiffly, shivering violently, went over to the door, opened it quite purposelessly, and stood for what seemed a very long time, staring into the dark corridor. Then I went back and sat at the desk. The terror that had grasped me at my awakening—or perhaps even before it—was superseded once more by the emptiness that seemed to suck out the brains. The tiredness had gone, and a queer unnatural calm took possession of me. I could wait for a long time now. Something had burned out inside me, I knew, and nothing seemed to matter much any more. It must be like that, if I knew he was really dead, I thought, without surprise or fear. Just like that.

I returned to the couch, lay down again and switched off the light. The dark touched my eyes like a caress. I need not use my eyes, I thought. I can lie back and rest. It is not even very hard to lie quiet. Everything is only hard up to a certain point. Then it becomes indifferent. I can wait now. It is so late that I shall soon have certainty, but it does not matter when. I have no hope or fear now. I am not even tired. I am through this too. I can wait.

I remembered there was a cigarette left in the packet on the table. I groped for it, found it, and lay slowly smoking, dragging out the time. The thing was to keep awake. If you slept, you gathered strength, psychically and physically, and everything started over again. If you didn't sleep, you might hold out—

I did not know how long I had been lying in the dark, when the telephone rang. I got up and took it, without realizing what I was doing. A voice said something, and I answered, not connecting anything at all with question or reply. The voice repeated some words insistently. Suddenly the words had a meaning. I clutched the receiver as if it were the only real thing in the world. . . .

'Thank God—it's not serious? And he is with you—yes, I'll be there in a moment.'

I leant against the wall, giddy and sinking with emotion. The calm had vanished completely, and as I stood there, the tears came at last. Without even trying to keep on my feet, I sank to my knees and sobbed out the fear and the relief with my forehead pressed hard against the edge of the table before me.

A week later they did get him. He shot himself when he knew there was no escape. He doesn't seem to have suffered very long, though he did not die instantly. It didn't make so much difference, at first. I had expected it all along. But later on it did make a difference. All the difference in the world.

FEAR

TOVE DITLEVSEN

MR. GREGERS, confidential clerk, was in excellent spirits as, with his case under his arm, he opened the gate and went down the road to the station. He only met one or two people, and he was walking on the strip of gravel close to the fences, as he did not want to make too much noise; one knows how irritating it is to lie in bed and hear the noise of footsteps in the road outside: oh, there he is again, disturber of the peace! And he wasn't a disturber of the peace, far from it. He did not annoy a human soul, stuck to his work, paid his taxes, and there was certainly no reason at all for him to tiptoe along the corporation side-walks, for fear he should disturb some petty villa-owners—fat business-men who were snoring away in the morning, while other people ——

Scared by his own thoughts he cast a glance at the drawn blinds, which enclosed his walk on both sides: all right, I beg your pardon, they are human beings too, and if one could sleep all through the forenoon, one would appreciate having the right to do so and not being envied by anybody.

He looked at the baker's clock, he was a bit late and quickened his step. At the corner of the road he passed Mr. Terkildsen, the shoemaker, and, as usual, he raised his hat to him, but the shoemaker looked straight in front of him and went past as if he were both deaf and blind.

Well, he did not see me—thought Mr. Gregers—he was far away, busy with his own thoughts, as I often am myself. It is a very ordinary thing to be walking along absorbed in one's own thoughts, not noticing anything else.

But whatever was the matter, his good spirits had gone. He was not at his ease any more. It seems quite impossible that he should not have noticed me. We meet in that place every morning, and he always does our shoes. Could he be deliberately avoiding me? Has he heard a rumour of some kind? Common people like that will believe the worst; any rumour

may catch their interest. Perhaps even now he is standing in his shop saying: yes, he raised his hat to me as usual, but I looked straight past him—or rather through him. But what could there be to say about him? What could that rumour be about? His house was paid for, his wife was irreproachable, his children well brought up. What could they say about him? However, these days only a word was needed, and a man's life was wasted. Still, nobody could have any doubt about his standpoint and where his heart was. No, he had expressed himself clearly about that also in the shoemaker's shop—yes, now he remembered distinctly—especially there. A horrible thought took hold of him—perhaps the shoemaker was on the other side. He would be lost if that were the case, completely lost. Perhaps even now they were ringing at his door, and Agnes would open it with curling papers in her hair and wearing her blue morning wrap, and she would not have time to say one word; they would rush past her into the entrance-hall holding a revolver against her breast. 'Your husband—don't be afraid, Mrs. Terkildsen—it is your husband we are looking for!'

Fear made him perspire; his hands were shaking, so that he could not open his paper in the train; of course, that was what it was. That is, if things were at their worst. It might be something that had nothing to do with politics, something less dangerous. Something that lay in wait for them, something you could not lay your hands on and which came in every new place they moved to, as if he himself were a deadly offence to his surroundings. But here, in this place, everything had gone well until now. He had been met with friendliness, his wife exchanged opinions with the tradespeople, and the children had got playmates among the children of the other villa-owners. It looked as if everything was going to be all right again. They had their house, they were respectable people, their neighbours thought well of them—they were friendly to everybody—respectable tax-payers . . .

He stepped off the train and looked at the station clock and found out that he would have to run if he were to reach the office in time. It would be a catastrophe if he were late. He had only recently become head clerk. Miss Hansen had also

applied for the position, in spite of the fact that she had been there a year less than him. If he had not been promoted to the position, it would have meant an open slight in the eyes of the whole office, considering the number of years he had been there and so on. But if you look at things, as they appear even to a person who is not directly interested: Miss Hansen could not be feeling very friendly towards him after this, and if occasion arose—though how it should, it is not very easy to see—she certainly would not let an opportunity pass to provide a last straw; that is, if she heard rumours or things like that. For instance, something in connection with this shoemaker—business folk talk to a lot of people, so it was not altogether out of the question . . .

When, half running, half walking, he had passed the first street, he thought: that was River Street, but it could not possibly have been, for now he was actually passing River Street. What a nuisance! He simply had not time to run back and see what the name of that street was. Silly idea, anyhow, that he should want to know. You had to fight against ideas like that, or you could never tell where you would end. But trouble was at his heels, danger, a dark menace. He had only five minutes left now. He ran, holding on to his hat with his hand, and forced himself to think of the office, of Agnes, of the children. But somewhere in his brain there was a jungle of street names: River Street, Evers Street? No, not that, but perhaps Lavender Street? Suddenly he turned and ran like mad, back to free himself, back to some solution or other, Oh, Beach Street. Of course it was Beach Street, everything was all right now—or at least better. Beach Street, the sound of the word was soothing, that was what it was, and it certainly had its own reward. He felt like a tub that had been full to the brim and had now been partly emptied and could take a small quantity again: balance, a little momentary peace.

Out of breath he reached the office—and, of course, ran into Miss Hansen in the locker room, where she was tidying up her hair before the mirror.

Good morning, he said and looked at her pleadingly. How awful for such an elderly woman, he thought, to spend the whole of her life in an office; she hasn't the least chance to

escape any longer. But it was not his fault, she couldn't blame him. Nobody could demand that he should have married her. He did not think either that thoughts like that could ever have come to her mind. Moreover she was more than twenty years older than him, at least. One had to stand aside before age. Maybe she herself had not even been expecting to get that position as a head clerk. They all agreed that he was the one that should have it, of course he was, it was his right quite simply.

Good morning, Mr. Gregers.

Why 'Mr.' Gregers? It sounded so ironical, so wounding: well, now you have become a head clerk, they will have to say Mr. Gregers to you. Most probably she had always been saying Mr. Gregers to him, and it was only the tone of voice that was different. So much is hidden in a tone of voice. Malice to an extent that one would need to cross oneself. And when one considers the short term of years one has to live, and how little it takes to make it a happy one for a human being: a bit of kindness and some goodwill. Only something quite negative: live and let live.

During the lunch hour one of his colleagues told about the proprietress of a dairy shop, where he bought his milk every morning. He was imitating her way of speaking: Oh, Mr. Frederiksen, isn't it a beautiful time that lies before us now. And in the autumn: Huh, Mr. Frederiksen, a dull time that lies ahead of us, don't you think? Mr. Gregers laughed loudly and felt very much at his ease: Now, talking about tradespeople, he said, back in our street we have for instance a shoemaker. We meet every morning in the same place: I raise my hat, and he says: Good morning, fine day, or just simply: Good morning. But what do you think happened this morning? I raised my hat, and he—he looked straight before him and continued to walk. What do you think of that?

But no liberating laughter followed his tale. Some of the people smiled politely and shook their heads, others simply hadn't been listening, and deeply depressed Mr. Gregers thought: I haven't got the power of telling things like that in a humorous way, or perhaps they can feel that I don't think it funny at all myself.

But while he was absorbed in his work towards closing time a terrible thought struck him: It didn't at all sound strange to them that the shoemaker did not greet him, they understood the man so very well. They knew why he did not do it, they knew what was told about him, Mr. Gregers. Things like that will come out in the long run, and the person in question is always the last to know. But after further consideration he abandoned the thought: of course they did not know anything, it was merely a trifle not worth wasting his thoughts on. Who should start rumours about him, he didn't harm a mother's soul, didn't contradict anybody, was apt to change his opinion if it could further his cause, or pretend to do so, only to curry favour with someone or other. It is no use to create enemies for oneself, they will come quickly enough.

But these days it was compulsory to have an opinion, and his was of course clear enough. He hated, or rather feared, all kinds of violence, the snob, any kind of fanaticism and, to be correct, any form of taking sides openly, even if it was quite clear where he stood—of course—all good Danes—but it created enemies, like this shoemaker, and who would have thought that?

When he got off the train and went home, everything seemed a bit brighter to him. In any case he had laid a terrible day behind him, and back home the dinner was waiting for him. Agnes had changed her dress, and the children would run to meet him. He must remember to buy some little present for them, a bugle for baby. Well, he thought, I am a man in a good position, I have done honest work to deserve it, no elbowing and intrigues—a peace-loving man on his way home. I respect the rights of other people, and in return I demand respect from them.

But these daring thoughts frightened him. Without noticing himself, he again paid attention to the street names, and had difficulty in remembering them, so any other kind of thought was out of the question. Then he noticed the shoemaker crossing the street and coming towards him. He got so excited that he was hardly able to return the shoemaker's greeting: Fine day, Mr. Gregers.

He felt overwhelmingly liberated, almost to tears, when he straightened his back and took a deep breath. Quickly, almost literally walking on air, he went towards home. He looked towards the pale evening sky and smelt something like spring in the air: he is quite right, that shoemaker, the dear old chap, that excellent fellow, it is really an exceptionally fine day.

(Translated by G. Reesen)

I SEE IT TO-NIGHT

by MORTEN NIELSEN

I see it to-night, his hand outthrust,
ready in silence
to separate soul from dust.
A snick and a trickle of blood, drip, drip . . .
drop down and be gone
in the peace of the long sleep.

Nothing to forfeit. No one to call.
Lie quiet—a sigh—
you have jettisoned all
that befell you, all there is yet to fulfil.
Now—snowfall of darkness,
snow to make still.

Within, importunate whispers implore:
'You fail me too often,
you've stinted my store.'
Then in anguish: 'Deserted, bereft of its right,
your destiny lingers,
if you go to-night.'

You must grow, and blossom, and seed by and by.
You're too little as yet to die.

(Translated by R. P. Keigwin.)

A POSTCARD FROM SPAIN

by KJELD ABELL

As land and as water
God's finger created the globe—
free ocean to sail, free land to inhabit.
But like a child drawing in sand
and saying: 'That's mine, not yours—
not yours, I tell you!'—
so did man draw with his finger
the map.

We live on a map,
imprisoned by iron-bar frontiers.
Language is a frontier.
Mind, hugging its right
to have and to hold—
everything, in time, is a frontier.
Few know themselves,
fewer still each other.

The sun, while branding the blond
with spots and with freckles,
brings the comeliest flush
to the cheek of the dark-eyed.
Feathers make birds—yes, yes,
outwardly all of us creatures of clothes and of climate,
but within still lingers the half-dead remnant
of the notion
about man.

Spanish, Danish—
do I know you?
And you me?
Well, you know my hair piled high
with comb and mantilla,
you watch me dance and you hear me sing
from the front of the stalls

POETRY

when Carmen is billed for the evening—
I love Carmen, Carmen loves me,
love and hate, ardour and flame, daggers and death,
the arena has emptied, the curtain may fall
to cascades of applause.

But Spain? . . . Spain?
Why, it's only a postcard from Spain—
postcard with scent of provocative skirts,
with spangles and flounces,
pirouetting and swaying with shoe-tap and stamp,
castanets beating time,
eyes that smile behind shutters and fans,
serenading, Sevilla, blue sky and sun,
sun on a postcard
with greetings from Spain.

That's all . . . Pah!

Have you forgotten Goya and Guernica?
You rummage about in your brain-box—Guernica, Guernica?
Oh—Guernica!
Yes, but, hang it all, that's such a long long way back—
right on the other side of the hell
you are just beginning to scramble out of.
Yet the war that went over you like a wind of death,
it began with us
(so easily forgotten).
The dress-rehearsal was with us
(just as easily forgotten).
Man-fighting—that was what came into fashion
in the wonderful arena of Spain.
The scarlet cloak took colour from human blood,
dried in the Spanish sun that sings
and parches through
to the very soul.
Drab-yellow dust and figures of black
under a heaven of hate and killing,

that was the postcard
 you preferred not to receive—
 but *shall* receive,
 now!

Not for my sake—oh, no—but for yours.

‘Ours, ours?’ you exclaim.

‘The cause of Spain isn’t ours.

In any case, there is no more now we can do;
 we are not interested.

Carmen needs smartening up; then we’ll applaud,
 but not sooner.

For *our* sake—twaddle!

Dear little Carmen is twaddling.’

You—

you fought and you won; won freedom
 and a free world.

But the world, can it be free as long as we,
 as Spain . . . ?

Oh, why won’t you listen?

Into the deaf ears of the whole world we bellow:
 Spain is not free,
 not free.

And you, mankind, you are not free either,
 while there’s a spot on the surface of the earth
 where violence, constraint and terror
 are thriving.

A spot on the map is a spot on you,
 on man.

The Carmen you see to-day,
 she is a spot, a blemish,
 on you,
 the free man.

Make her free—and you will be free.

(First published in the Danish paper ‘Politiken’, 1st January, 1947
 Translated by R. P. Keigwin.)

THE SHOW BOAT

by OTTO GELSTED

[The Show Boat, published in 1924, introduces a new era in Danish poetry as well as in Gelsted's own. It is a grim vision of a doomed society—capitalism, materialism, sensationalism—as seen by the young Danish student of the progressive intelligentsia who plans its destruction. From now on, there is a tendency among Danes to make poetry a weapon in the fight for freedom, very pronounced during the years of the Nazi régime in Germany and culminating during the Occupation.]

The ship heads straight into harbour
at shadowy dusk.

Her megaphone bellows salute to the city,
the electric searchlights
level their five-splintered beams
up in the air like a comet's tail
and scrawl in firescript on the clouds:

BUY A FORD

And the ship is transformed
to a garish glitter of lights from end to end;
airmen bombard her with bengal-lights;
the funnel shaped like a bottle of Tuborg,
and the daubed sides with their colossal figures and
lettering like a fantastic camouflage,
the Kodak girl, Johnnie Walker and the rest of them,
alternate in dazzling colours
that are mirrored in the water . . .
till the ship is riding, now in a green abyss,
now in a blaze of yellow flickering flame,
now in a pool of blood.

And on board—what is there not on board?
Here are exhibits of painting and cooking,
French cuisine and cubism and chemical recipes;
here is the Social Exhibition showing society in longitude,
from the proletarian eaten up by lice in a dustbin
to the *toilette de luxe* of the millionaire.

Here are clinics for make-up and bureaux for suicide,
which men in despair can consult for a suitable fee;

here are displayed the latest stunts of the doctor's art,
 men and women who are interchangeable;
 here is the ship herself with all that's in vogue:
 tennis-courts and swimming-pools, the church and the news
 paper office
 (that prints you the whole Bible in instalments);
 here is the giant gyroscope,
 whose 180,000 revolutions to the minute
 neutralize all motion
 and safeguard the passengers from sea-sickness.

And here finally are the passengers—
 all of them symbols of sensation and publicity.
 The 136-year-old patriarch from Volhynia,
 who was with Napoleon at Moscow,
 the 6-year-old chess genius, Sammi Meyer, from Poland,
 and the Siamese Twins. . . .
 Then, of course, an adequate selection
 of the world-war's bankrupt monarchs and celebrities,
plus—among the crew and the galley-staff—
 the inevitable Russian grand-dukes
 and opera-queens from Vienna.

And, in the first class,
 film-stars:
 the Hero from the Wild West
 (with Odol smile),
 the World's Comedian
 (with Odol smile)
 and the Sunbathing Beauty
 (Odol smile).

But away up the harbour
 sits a man in a shanty
 in front of a table with contraptions and clock-dials. *
 He has a shag-pipe in his mouth
 and looks like a common-or-garden blond Danish student.
 He is waiting for the moment
 when the ship comes over the right spot.
 Then he will press a button.

POETRY

It is not fire from heaven he is waiting for;
no, he himself will raise fire from the abyss.
And in the midst of the popular shimmy,
'Shake me till I shiver,'
while a man of fire strides forth on the show boat
and proclaims a new truth to all mankind—

OMA IS BEST—

there re-echoes a crash . . .

APRIL 9th

by OTTO GELSTED

The significance of this small poem will hardly be fully understood outside Denmark. Denmark was occupied by Germany on April 9, 1940, and this poem was the first expression of that strong patriotic feeling which at once united the Danish people, irrespective of political differences. The effect of these lines was all the stronger because Otto Gelsted, as a revolutionary socialist, had hitherto scorned patriotism.

At dawn the dark birds flew
with scream of motor-screw,
squadrons that swept across the city's brow.
We saw them go and, seeing,
knew to our inmost being
that we must taste the bread of bondage now.

A morn of cloudless blue.
The sun, so sorely due,
shining at length, but as on sightless eyes.
Cramped in her captive chain
lay Denmark, dumb with pain,
in deepest need and unknown agonies.

But on that fateful day
when bleeding there you lay
and all about was gloom and mortal fear,
we saw you then and, seeing,
knew to our inmost being
that never did we hold our land so dear.

(Translated by R. P. Keigwin.)

SPRING DAY BY A CITY LAKE

by HARALD HERDAL

I love your shabby green cloak
that is full of winter,
faded and forlorn.
The pitiless springtime
exposes unmercifully
how ancient it is.
I love its suggestion of want
clinging to the rich bounty of your body.

And your blue shivery blouse
curving softly about your breasts,
wrapping your broad loins
that were created for childbirth;
I envy your blue dress
as it kisses your knees—
I should do that.

You have the maidenly blue
shy gentleness
of spring's first violets
on the slopes of the Vestre cemetery
down by the railway.

You are womanly mature,
full-bloomed and courageous
like the scarlet tulips
that carry themselves so straight
in the gardens of Valby.

But the whole of your beautiful body
is as fresh and as sweet
as the day at early-rising.

(Translated by R. P. Keigwin.)

LARVAE

GUNNAR HELWEG-LARSEN

(Written in August, 1940)

[The author of this article, who is now the Danish Press Attaché in Stockholm, was editor of a daily paper in Copenhagen, Kristeligt Dagblad, when the Germans occupied Denmark on April 9, 1940. This modest little journal quickly got thousands of new readers when apparently non-political and harmless subjects were dealt with in such a way that everyone—except the Germans—understood the real meaning hidden behind the words. Helweg-Larsen was a master of ambiguous expression, and he forced his readers to be masters of reading between the lines. In 1941, however, after an article praising the Norwegian people for their heroic fight, the Germans demanded Helweg-Larsen's resignation, and he had to leave his paper.]

GRIM tidings reach us from the Vallø woods, an ordinarily peaceful and idyllic locality, where the dreaded larva of the tussock moth has attacked the foliage of the beech-trees to an extent never before known.

The moth itself is a fairly inconspicuous creature. After reaching years of discretion it leads a peaceful, bourgeois life; but in the earlier stages of its existence it can be tiresome enough. The larva is very conspicuous, especially the doughty male with his citron yellow brushes, each ending in a fiery tassel, and his body surrounded by velvet black rings.

The proclivity of the larva that is most justly dreaded is its voracious appetite. When these larvæ, in battle array, fall upon an area of woodland, it is a bad business. They devour all that can be devoured. It is not only the beech, their natural food, that suffers. Every green and succulent thing becomes a victim. The sound of the larvæ gnawing the foliage can be heard from a considerable distance, and eye-witnesses aver that even after a short visit of the greedy guests the woods assume their winter garb.

It is easily understood that a visitation of this kind is a serious matter, even if one reckons on the winter putting a period to the trouble; but the forest officer anticipates still

worse times ahead. Late in the autumn the larvæ turn into chrysalises and, after becoming moths, they lay their eggs in the bark of trees, so that even worse destruction can be expected next year.

Now a pessimist might believe that the whole country would in this manner gradually be stripped bare. But Nature, in her wonderful way, keeps law and order. She has taken care that no tree should grow up through the sky and that no single kind of caterpillar should gain dominion over the whole wood. The forest officer in the afflicted district tells the Press that in the course of a year or two a counter-attack will inevitably be made. A parasite fungus will wipe out the tussock moths, now so arrogant.

Thus does Nature ring the changes. Rhythm is eternal. Conquest always contains the germs of defeat. We think ourselves invincible with our lemon yellow brushes and fiery tassels. But behind the pomp and splendour of the tassel are germinating the spores of the parasite fungus which will one day put an end to all the glory. Circumstances are strong. If we had our way, more gentle laws would prevail. We should attempt to keep the tussock moth within bounds by peaceful persuasion. We should peacefully induce it to understand moderation. But this is no business of ours. It is the Great Forest Officer himself who determines the means he intends to employ in maintaining the balance of Nature.

(Translated by Gilbert Carter)

FRAGMENTS OF PRISON DIARY AND LETTERS

GEORG QUISTGAARD

4TH MAY, 1944. All the same, one cannot help having fancies. One wants to do something different; for instance, to step across where the others step aside, to eat one's meals an hour earlier or later, or to sit on a seat in the full sunshine. It hardly matters what, as long as it is not the usual routine.

—And then one has to suffer the presence of a fellow prisoner—a malodorous 'trusty'—handing round the plates while grinning ingratiatingly at the fat-cheeked soldier who insolently opens his mouth with a grimace.

I know what is the matter. It is the sentries that get on my nerves. A picked lot just arrived from Oslo—*neud de vipères*. At two o'clock it will be better. At two o'clock they will be relieved.

—However, I have found myself a peaceful corner, well down below and away from the door. The strident clamour of the bell reaches me like a blurred memory; and the rattling keys and the clang of the iron gate when visitors arrive. Or *Meister's* shouted orders and the clatter of the washing up; the calling out of numbers, of prisoners for *Vernehmung*. All that which takes place in the confines of a prison. Everything seems at a distance, packed away out of sight, wrapped in silence. Only the shouts from the lavatories penetrate: '*Rechts ist frei—links ist frei—links ist besetzt—ein Mann rechts.*' The war is being fought on many fronts, but these men, too, deserve honourable mention. Their will is inflexible, their victory complete. They maintain order in three hundred stomachs.

—I think of our books, the books we received at Christmas; of *War Pilot*, *Sandemose*, and *All Passion Spent*; of all the books you intend bringing back from Sweden. I will think no more, only lie back and read *Love Conquers*. It is in the *Weekly Magazine*, Number eleven, price twenty Øre. To be continued.

Let us hope the next instalment will be available in the W.C.

5th May. 116 days since we last saw each other. I think of it so often. It was seven in the morning and I was sleepy; you bent down to say good-bye, and we were to meet again in a few days. When you had gone I became fully awake and a little afraid of what might happen to you and I regretted that I had not come to the station with you. When we meet again we shall both have been abroad. I hope I may have gained in character what I have lost in weight. And that I may preserve it!

10th May. My neighbour on the left is a parachute retriever. Well, you believed him to be a spy—and so did I—but that was only a blind. Nor has he been here ten months, but only two, according to the latest report. And as for being shot about the middle of May—he said to-day that he expected ‘to be released next year when the war is over’. As likely as not he will turn out to be King Peter of Yugoslavia.

—A strong friendship is developing to the right. The atmosphere in ‘*Vestre*’ prison—thin as it is—has a peculiarly encouraging influence on budding sympathies. Honestly and without guile one opens one’s arms wide and receives and gives from an impoverished heart and a paltry store. There is a biblical purity in our demeanour, but also martyrdom in sight. It could mean three days close confinement to exchange ideas about the bookseller’s Christmas catalogue.

—‘*Grüss Gott,*’ said Claire. ‘*Alles gut,*’ said the soldier. Both of them had the best of intentions, but Claire’s greeting was accompanied by a large smile and the soldier’s by a sigh as if it emanated from the body of the entire German people. It struck me once again what a paradox it is—and even sometimes must seem to themselves—that these people keep us in prison because we have won the war! The previous battalion came from Russia, and were tired of war and politically apathetic. Nor did they try to hide it! When we had finished talking, and the door shut, and the key turned, one felt oneself to be a super in a comic play. Can one hide the rising sun beneath a saucepan lid?

The Oslo picket is another matter. Small men, duty-loving and regulation-bound, only three in all, but enough to be one

of the plagues of Egypt. One of them is most likely a tram conductor. He has a lifeless, bloated face, legs astride and bleary eyes, which seem to look rather at the ticket than at the person. One cannot help expecting him to raise his arm—and then the tram is off. Only this morning he advised a man with incipient appendicitis of the necessity, according to the regulations, to get up and obtain permission to stay in bed. His voice is as deep as an echo in the Alps. A sluggish and immovable type. Number two is the typical shrimper: alert, attentive, crouching, with a look in the eye that glimmers with suppressed desire for more than this! His temperament leads one to suspect that the catch is only sandfleas. His voice is reedy and somewhat woolly. A devil in the guise of a child. The third is the schoolmaster type, or perhaps only the one who metes out punishment. But a man with respect both for himself and for the law. Broad and squat with gimlet eyes behind the spectacles, he performs his trifling tasks on ever new and carefully conceived lines. A harsh jailer, correct in his duties and loose tongued among his own bosom friends. To all of them we are prisoners, awkward prison chattels. We are ticketed, docketed, and numbered. The nature of our 'crime' is to them surely of minor consideration. Gladly would they punish harder, because punishment is instructive. And the performance pleases the perpetrator.

The Gestapo H.Q. has fetched my dossier. In comes Albert—nervous and uncommunicative and very sunburned. 'Schön' and 'Viel Dank' and bangs the door. After that we start from the beginning: Why? and again why?

I hear we are to be moved to another wing this week. Six cells have I now occupied. Is that not enough? I would rather rot where I am! But every time one gets dug out again. And what about my sunshine, my calendar, and my neighbour. And the mattress which I like so much. I have become a very old man. I fight shy of people and hate change. That is, *except the great one that is coming!!!!*

11th May. The Court has met. They are sitting in there. The mystical judges have become a three-fold reality. One fat and two younger ones. All are SS men. At the end of the table a fast-writing officer of pleasant appearance. Prosecuting

counsel, counsel for the defence and a court official. Nothing is lacking; two barking Court assistants for good measure. I have been examined and am now isolated with a guard and a dining-room suite. The floor is covered with cork-lino. It is very quiet in here; outside spring is well advanced. The pigeons of the city are strutting on the sunbaked cornices. . . .

12th May. (Here the guard stopped me. *Das Schreiben ist verboten*. He would have liked to give permission, but he is only an underling.) The Court met. The Court sat. The Court rose. We were twelve accused. I have been branded as the instigator, for want of a worthier—a charge which does not hold water. But the indictment breathed fire and blood, and now my only hope is that I may yet be allowed to remain on this earth even if it must be on foreign soil for a short while!

—The whole night you were with me in my thoughts and we talked of many things, quite sensibly. But to-day you have gone away again, and there is nothing for me to do but write. And however much I write to you, I shall never get written that which I so much want to say.

Yet another 'greeting' did I get from you last night, whispered, secretly, even under strict surveillance. I do not know the messenger, nor does he know you; he had it from someone else. Devious paths, but serviceable nevertheless.

—Twelve accused were we, mostly worthy material. Only K. seems to me lacking. Brusque and perplexed, even after four months' reflection. I was sorry for him, but realization is bound to come to him eventually.

Bent and Jacob were produced as witnesses. Attentive and smug they sat there in their long overcoats. A proud day for Jacob; eight of the accused had him to thank for their presence here.—'Denied, but proved by the evidence of Jacob Jensen.' It became almost monotonous. And almost unbelievable.

The climax was reached when the Court rose from their seats to examine a confiscated pipe scraper which prosecuting counsel exhibited.

Packed into lorries, as well hidden as a pearl in an oyster, behind the helmeted hard-bitten soldiery, we returned to our own particular niche.

(Later the same day.)

Little darling! So this is how it feels to receive one's death sentence! May you and Mother feel no worse about it!!

But I am still alive and still writing and have taken three vitamin pills to-night. In spite of everything one can hardly realize it!

I am not shocked—nor do I think that I shall be. But I must stop writing this letter. There is still a possibility of a reprieve, and an appeal must be lodged. I must think it out to-night and draw it up to-morrow. And then I shall write to you again.

A member of the Court, with whom I spoke after the verdict, explained that the carrying out of the sentence (also the granting of a reprieve) depends upon developments in the political situation. But why am I telling you this? To cheer myself, of course. You know it all too well already.

— Four altogether, and every one took it splendidly!

I wish I could concentrate in earnest. Life is no more long enough that one can afford to put off thinking until to-morrow.

16th May. The ceiling above me creaks from someone's unbounded impatience. Six steps one way and six the other. It is the same for all of us. We are all waiting. He expects his freedom and I penal servitude 'for life'.

I had a talk with the 'kitchen squad', the meal distributors. It was one of those golden moments when a prisoner and not a soldier slammed the door. We have only seconds to spare, so we have learned brevity. They mentioned the text of the public notification. 'That the carrying out of the sentences depend upon the attitude of the public.' That was what I already knew, but I did not know that it had been publicly announced. So you and mother know it too. And you are also certain to think that it is unlikely there will be any funeral!

They are still strong—terribly strong! They dare still to take hostages. It is a slow death they are preparing. Well-cooked war criminals served up tastily; but the war is nearing its end. We know it and they know it, and in all neutral countries pointed pens are scratching. We shall see whether they dare use us.

I maintained in December that no more death sentences would be carried out here. Since then I have said many other

things which have proved wrong. But I may be proved right about what I said in December. . . .

—One thing has irritated me somewhat. I had started writing a record of the trial, of the journey back, and of the small travelling circus with lightning on the collar and deaths' head badges on the caps. I began it on the eleventh, but was stopped by the guard. Since then everything has happened so quickly, and in the present circumstances I think it is too late to continue.

It would sound silly and macabre to you, should you read it later.

17th May. I realized to-day that it has suddenly become summer. It was a grey day with fine rain, but there were swallows over the roof and tulips along the paling. A rather odd feeling.

—I now have a small companion. Gentle company which does not disturb my everyday life. It is a fly, six-legged, and well content. In spite of the open window this is its second day here. It has no name, it is just the fly. We are only the two of us, and we know each other by sight. I have now put crumbs on the window sill, and in return I expect it to stay.

—One becomes superstitious in prison. One has so much time to spare that one appreciates even the tiniest things. The infinitesimal things that one does not usually spare a thought for and which now must be afforded some importance in the general pattern. And some benefit can be drawn from it all, because I now see things in that light!

—I take this view, too, because I know how much we are thinking of each other. I know how terribly hard it must be for you and mother. A toss of the coin straight out of cheap melodrama. For myself, it seems in an odd way not to concern me. I am a little impatient, but one is like that even at the barber's. I count the days which are to come and find bigger chances for each one. As yet, I have not felt really depressed for ten seconds. I should so very much like to help you both, and I feel in a strange way that this is possible if we think of each other and believe in the same things and are all of good courage. And should, nevertheless, the worst happen, you must know that for me personally it has been easy; what was

hard was to know that I could be of such small help to you. I ought now to begin repenting. I could repent for all the days I spent with you which I wasted through being in bad spirits. There is, of course, much else besides, but even if I were to repent, it would give you no pleasure. Instead I prefer to feel thoroughly satisfied with the good times we have had together. I have always lived my life, as it were, backwards. I have been holding on to what I have gained instead of aiming higher and striving like most people. I was in doubt as to whether I were right, but now I think that I was. And if you could now see all that which we have experienced together from the same angle, instead of thinking of what more we might have got out of it, then I am sure you would agree with me. That is the danger in family life, that in a case like this one feels one loses something which, as a matter of fact, one has never possessed. And, for the rest, try to help each other whenever necessary. Philosophy is all right, but there are days when it is difficult to live up to it.

I write just what comes into my head, and this is by way of being my 'Testament'. I write it to you both, and if it prove possible, then I shall live up to it. And now, let us think of something brighter; at least that is what I am going to do!

—My dear little one! Good news to-night: four new verdicts of the same kind. Strange to call four death sentences 'good news', but that is exactly what I mean. I have written myself dry for to-night, and it will soon be dark! Good night, and sleep well until to-morrow.

(The last letter, written the day before his execution.)

20th May, 1944.

My beloved little Mother!

Now comes the worst. Well, not for me; for me it will not be difficult, but it will for you. But you have been marvellous, and you will continue to be so. You will need all your courage, but you have never yet failed! And I know that you will be convinced that in spite of everything it proved to be of some use!! It is a very small comfort to offer you, but if you know that it is sufficient for me, then it will mean something to you too.

Why you have again to lose something, I do not understand.

But try to think not only of what you are losing, but of what we have been to each other. I know what Father meant and still means to you, and in the same way the two of us will always mean so much to each other. And you have already given me so much good that it is impossible for me to feel bitter because there will be no more.

—There is so much I should like to repent, and so much that I could and ought to have done for you, but which I never did. But I will not spend time regretting; I only want to be so very glad at the thought of how well we have understood each other, even when I went my own peculiar ways.

The first days will be terribly hard for you. But you must not forget for one single moment how much you still have. You have not only Bodil, but also Bodil's boys. They represent a fresh start in life, and you can teach them much of what you have taught me. Why it is you, who must always give, I do not know, but it must be good to have something to give.

I am afraid I am not expressing myself very well to-night: I am not used to saying what I feel, nor has that been necessary between us. We were fond of each other, and we will go on being fond of each other, quite simply and without end.

You must realize, and let it be of what help it can to you, that it all seems strangely easy to me. It has not been in vain, and therefore it is so simple.

Goodbye, and fare you well, my darling Mother. Your boy loves you.

Georg.

(Translated by Lydia Cranfield.)

GEORG QUISTGAARD (1915-44), a young Dane aspiring to be an author, joined the Resistance Movement in the early days of the German occupation. On 13th January, 1944, he was caught by the Gestapo, sent to prison at Schwerin in Germany for two months, then brought back to Vestre Prison in Copenhagen and tried by a Nazi court, sentenced to death on 12th May, and, after a reprieve had been refused, executed on 21st May, 1944. He now lies buried at the Memorial Grove of Ryvangen in Copenhagen, together with one hundred and eleven other executed Danish patriots.

During the last three weeks of his imprisonment, Georg Quistgaard succeeded in secretly writing a prison diary for his wife, who had escaped to Sweden, and this—together with some letters to his mother—was smuggled out of prison. After the Liberation these documents were published in Denmark as a book, from which the above extracts have been taken.

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THIS is a volume of theory by the late eminent Danish philologist Jespersen, compressed into a short compass but on the whole less popular in form and content than the publishers would have us suppose. Most readers would probably find the first half of the book scholastic—sometimes almost Strabismic—so, as when the author competes with Sweet and Morsbach for the palm of having first observed that the best speakers of a standard language are those who least betray their regional origin. But the later chapters, in which, having examined the social stratification of language, Jespersen enters the territory of slang and linguistic mysticism, offer much that is irresistible to anyone with the slightest feeling for the mysterious life of words.

He deals, for example, with the languages of concealment, including the persistent special uses of Latin; with the inextinguishable pleasure of playing with words, which is as old or older than the Edda, and wherein Urquhart actually improved upon Rabelais, who is mentioned; with the self-invented slang of Mrs. S. T. Coleridge; with the baby-talk often affected towards children, 'in the quite mistaken belief that the little ones understand this language more easily than ordinary English'; and with an astonishing variety of instances of the effect of taboo on language. Why do we call a bear a bear? Why has the old Aryan name for the animal, which we know from Greek, Latin, and other sources, entirely disappeared in a number of related languages? Because, we are told, fear of the beast placed a taboo on his original name and replaced it by circumlocutions—in Russian by 'honey-eater', in Lapland tongues by 'grandpapa with the skin coat', in Danish, German, and English by forms meaning 'the brown' (does the French retention of the Aryan root mean that that country was less infested by bruin in early days, or that its

"That wise and tolerant, acute and learned Dane."—*The Listener*.

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inhabitants were psychologically tougher, or merely that for other reasons they became linguistically more dependent on Rome?). Two of the learned author's intriguing observations, it should be pointed out, seem to suggest an unresolved conflict, whether in the processes of speech themselves, or among commentators. On p. 39, in treating of family languages, pet-names, and other intimate forms and expressions, he notes that 'closely related languages often diverge from one another noticeably in their expressions for such notions as "boy" and "girl" which there is so much occasion to talk about in family life'. But on p. 217 he sees 'the universal human element' attested by the familiar fact that 'words of the form *mama*, *papa*, *tata*, *nana*, crop up in the most different places as expressions of the concepts which are earliest formed in the consciousness of the child'.

It is on this universal human element that Dr. Jespersen seems partly to rely for his sanguine belief that 'unless something quite incalculable happens which completely changes the way of life on this globe, the future will see greater and greater unifications in all languages which are spoken essentially in the same way by millions of speakers'. For the political and mechanical factors of unification, which most of us would think of first, are only very briefly referred to. In his rejection of mass concepts such as the 'folk-mind', his continual emphasis on the individual and his resolute faith in language as an instrument of expression rather than a mere means of communication, he shows again and again that 'something common to all mankind lies concealed behind the varied multiplicity of phenomena'.

We have heard that before, from old-fashioned gentlemen with Greek and Latin names, with Italian, French, German, and English names too. But somehow it has lately become a little obscured. Not the least reward of patience in reading Dr. Jespersen's book with attention comes in its refreshing reassertion, in a possibly unexpected quarter, of the values of humanism.

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TWELVE STORIES. STEEN STEENSEN BLICHER. Translated by Hanna Astrup Larsen, Introduction by Sigrid Undset. Princeton University Press. 20s.

VERY nearly a century after the author's death, here is at last a decent translation into English of some of his best stories. This in itself should be an occasion of great, though not uncritical, rejoicing.

Steen Steensen Blicher is an eminent example of the disadvantages of being (*a*) an author, (*b*) an author writing in a language only understood by some four million people, (*c*) an author born out of his right time. He was a genius, and a genius of the not unusual sort that is better to know through books than through personal contact; his fate was tragic, his circumstances were sordid, and his life in most respects was a prolonged misery, lit only by moments of vision and by the more steady gleam of his love of nature and his true understanding of human joy and suffering. Had he written his finest stories and poems in one of the world languages, he would long ago have taken his place among the very best minor classics of world literature. And had he been born a few decades earlier or later he might have come into his own, while still alive—and might have avoided some of the faults that mar much of his work.

As it is, Blicher, born in 1782, and dying in 1847, can with equal right be considered a belated eighteenth-century rationalist or a forerunner of realism in literature. His position is somewhat akin to that of Jane Austen in English literature. His genius, too, is not wholly unlike that of this masculine-minded and feminine-hearted observer of men and manners. But he paints on a much broader canvas and in much stronger, and generally coarser, colours. Also his output was altogether too large for him to keep the standard of his best work throughout. But then how good is that best work! We may easily forgive and forget hundreds of pages of hack-writing, undertaken for a living, for a single story like 'The Journal of a Parish Clerk', that contrives the miracle of creating that rare character: a sympathetic prig; or 'The Hosier and his Daughter' that tells the most soul-shattering tale in the simplest of terms; or 'The Parson at Vejlbj', another



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masterpiece in the sad, but never humourless, vein that was Blicher's.

All these stories and nine more are to be found in the present volume. Lovers of Blicher might wish for the inclusion of one or two of their favourites, and a 'popular' story like the 'Robbers' Den' might without great loss have given place to a few shorter, but more important stories. But then a selection never satisfies anyone but the man who made it. The translator has acquitted herself well though of course the homeliness and latent beauty of the Jutland dialect in the stories from 'The Knitting-Bee' cannot be brought out fully in any translation. Sigrid Undset has written an introduction which, though a bit wordy and not always to the point, is a valuable and worthy author's homage to a master of writing.

ELSA GRESS

THE ANGELIC AVENGERS. PIERRE ANDRÉZEL. Putnam.
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THIS novel was first published in Copenhagen in 1944. It now comes out in England with an announcement by the publishers that 'Pierre Andrézel, whose name appears on this novel, is described as a young Frenchman, born in Rouen, 1915, and educated at Oxford'. The photograph with which this statement is embellished would seem, however, to have been deliberately chosen to refute these assertions and it will be more readily agreed that 'Pierre Andrézel has not been heard of since the appearance of his novel in Denmark'. Nor, one may hazard, will he be again; he has served his purpose.

The story itself, also a mystery, concerns two young girls who, in the mid-nineteenth century, escape the white-slave market by the aid of black magic. One is an orphan, fleeing from the attentions of her employer; the other, daughter of a bankrupt Nabob, fleeing from her father's creditors. There are disguises, mistaken identity, flights by night (from balconies, down vines). A faded, yellow, and incriminating letter is discovered in a drawer. A grave is dug at night outside the room in which cower the intended victims. We have seducers, gay and not so gay. We have a Negro nurse called Olympia, an Aunt Arabella, and a wicked English clergyman called Mr.



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Pennhallow who lives in France and lures maidens to a fate worse than death. And all this is presented, rather mistily, as an allegory—one to which, it must be confessed, there seems an insufficiency of clues.

Yet the story holds. Not on account of its style. This, though no translator is mentioned, hardly reads as English. 'Already as a child she had lost her mother,' 'one day Ambrose, somewhat downhearted, for a long time questioned his cousin about one of her friends,' 'all the evening she could not stop weeping,' are random but typical examples. There is also a habit of reference to 'riding-horses', which makes an English ear prick. Though set in 1840, the book has no sense of period. Yet it holds, by virtue of the quality so noticeable in others of this writer's works, that of Gothic atmosphere and imaginativeness, and if the reader wonders who the author really is, he will find the name, in another connection, elsewhere on the dust-jacket.

R. H.

THE NORTHERN TANGLE. ROWLAND KENNEY. Dent.
12s. 6d.

OTHER people's nations are tiresome things. A Scotsman is aghast at submerging his identity with the south, and the Irish, Welsh, and even the English have a sense of discrimination where Great Britain is concerned. But when the Balkan or Scandinavian people urge their distinction one from another even a Scotsman is inclined to impatience. Yet, as Rowland Kenney's book *The Northern Tangle* makes clear, the Scandinavian countries are very much things apart, and the tangle, such as it is, has not led to unity. It is symptomatic that in Scandinavia 'Scandinavia' is going out of favour and that 'The Northern Countries' is increasingly used instead.

Being, comparatively speaking, the 'Quiet corner' of Europe, books on the Northern countries are few and often no more than travel guides. Mr. Kenney's book is all the more valuable in consequence, an informed and sympathetic introduction to the history and politics of the North. The survey ranges from the Viking Age to the recent war, each country being dealt with in its own section.

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that Northern harmony is very nearly illusory. It is as well that truths like this should be recognized. At the same time one cannot help feeling that Mr. Kenney has stressed too much the historical and political at the expense of the social and economic. The number of conferences on all kinds of subjects, held alternatively in the Scandinavian countries, is really astonishing, and there is undoubtedly a great deal of practical co-operation and exchange of information between Scandinavians in various walks of life. Such functional co-operation as embodied in the Scandinavian Airlines System inaugurated since the war is probably more valuable than many statutory measures.

Recent events have also suggested that many of the 'Psychological tensions' which the war engendered are evaporating rapidly. Sweden was neutral but has joined the United Nations in common with Norway and Denmark. Finland was on the Axis side but is now showing genuine desire to work her passage in friendship with Russia. Norway and Denmark are mending their war-time differences with Sweden. There is a general aura of friendship and agreement in the North to-day.

O. F. KNUDSEN

JOURNEY TO LONDON. DIK LEHMKUHL. Hutchinson.
10s. 6d.

THERE were frontier skirmishes when Norway opposed the Union with Sweden in 1814. Apart from that, Norway had lived in peace for centuries when the Germans invaded the country in April, 1940. Little wonder, therefore, that the war which followed was largely a story of improvisation. The wonder is that it was possible to carry on resistance for as long as two months.

Dik Lehmkuhl's *Journey to London* treats the Norwegian campaign from one particular angle, namely that of the Government which, pursued and harried by the Germans, successfully escaped capture by its journey north through the length of Norway and finally across the North Sea to London.

It is a strange story, an unusual story, the story of a government on the run, chased not only by the Germans, but by a



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camp-following of civil servants, all desperately anxious not to be left behind. The King, the ministers, the members of parliament, the officials and diplomats, are all portrayed very frankly in this crisis in their nation's existence.

We become painfully aware of human inadequacies. But we also come to acquire some respect for a set of people who had to make fateful decisions in a haze of uncertainty, ignorance, and misunderstanding. Dik Lehmkuhl has written up his material (based on interviews with the persons concerned when later in London) with a keen eye to the dramatic possibilities. The story of how the Bank of Norway's gold was saved (however much we may wonder whether the gold was worth saving) is in itself a remarkable odyssey.

There is humour as well as drama in this story, and we lose much of our awe for governments when they have to sleep three in a bed and purchase stationery in the village store. *Journey to London* has the minimum of political or military reference, and it gains in consequence. But we can glimpse the implications between the line: the preservation of the constitutional integrity of an independent nation. The fatal blunder of the Germans was their lack of understanding that nationalism was still an impelling force.

O. F. KNUDSEN

THE FAROES IN PICTURES. GORDON HUSSON. Allen and Unwin. 10s.

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village of Skardi, for instance, was so inaccessible that it could only be reached by men being hauled up a thirty-foot cliff. In 1835, none of the adults returned from fishing; only old men and boys were left. Yet it was not till 1913, when the same thing happened again, that the village was abandoned. . . . There are three times as many sheep as islanders. Despite its situation the capital, Thorshavn, is as warm in winter as Venice and Shanghai. After whale-hunting, puffin-catching is a national industry, but no bird is taken if it has a sardine in its beak as that is a sure sign that it is still feeding its young. The favourite sport is pony-racing, but as there is so little level ground, entries can be raced only in pairs, the times being compared later. For anyone with a love for the more out of the ordinary places of this earth, this book is highly recommended.

TED BERGEN

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EDITORIAL

June 1947

NIGHTINGALES kept me awake last night and this afternoon watching cricket sent me to sleep. There is no relationship between these events: I am inured to late hours, though they are rarely nightingale-given; I have fallen asleep watching (and, indeed, playing) cricket from my youth up. No, the only connection to be discovered between them is that both were pleasurable and neither was planned.

I wished the same could be said of this Editorial, but like other crises it seems only another instance of dreaming, or planning, being overtaken by reality of the kind known as 'unforeseen events'. But enough of slogans. It is they which sent me to sleep.

I dreamt, as my eyes closed on a field rimmed by chestnuts in full flower (or flame), by lilacs and by may awaited so long that the eventual glory of their blossoming had almost been forgotten. . . . I dreamt that, as long as these came in their season, there was healing for the eye, hope for the heart, and inspiration for the mind. And I dreamt that men came along—alas, only too truly in *their* season—to board the vista from view with more slogans. 'To Breathe's To Betray,' 'Eat British Grit,' 'Save Time, Don't Use It,' 'Sleep and the World Sleeps With You,' and other such incitements to torpor. The trees were hidden, the cow-parsley and bluebells trampled on, in the earnest endeavour to prevent our being tempted, by sight of beauty, to forget our allegiance to grime and sweat, our vowed devotion to ugliness and inessentials.

Then, like a cuckoo drowning the voices of ousel and lark, the words of a high-up loud-spoke. 'Loveliness is not needed. Therefore, permit it.' The mild revolutionariness of this last sentence suggested that indeed the New Age had come. But the corollary had a familiar ring. 'All that we need keep in short supply is what is essential. So burn the trees, lest there be

timber, destroy the wheat and set fire to the hay. But let London have lilac.' The order went forth. Immediately cars of high power and doubtfully provenanced petrol tore down to the woods, and tore them up too. Lilac and laburnum were lopped for luxurious sale; Operation Pineapple had begun. There was a slight hitch about lilac. This, it was pointed out by an official price-fixer whose present ardour matched the suspiciousness of his past, was a plant so out of step as to sport three party colours as it listed. What was to be done? Finally it was agreed that the white should be put on points, so that it would at once disappear; the deep purple, as being nearest crimson, should be rationed, so that everyone could have it—although being the rarest, there was not enough to go round. The pale mauve or grey—in fact, the lilac—should be uncontrolled, so that its price could soar sufficiently to pay for the whole seedy, or, since lilac is a shrub blooming, business.

While this was being arranged at a conference held outside the three-mile limit, further snags developed. Operation Pineapple was proving prickly. It seemed that the barrow-boys who were to sell the lilac and laburnum (they refused to handle the chestnut, having been sold on that, they said, in the winter)—the barrow-boys, who had originally been given rein to prevent big shops from competing, struck against being moved on. As it was for the convenience of the public that they should be, no difficulty was found in rescinding this order. This was held to be a most satisfactory decision, since it resulted in further victimizing of the public, by now the one true test for the suitability of every measure, major, minor, or minimum. Rifts appeared, however, in the loot. The Outer Brigade of Barrow-boys declared that the non-moving-on order gave the Inner Brigade of Barrow-boys an unfair advantage in the matter of pitch. The Inner maintained that in order to reach a good pitch, the Outer Boys had to start earlier and thus worked a longer day than was allowed. Both Brigades then downed shafts. The public remained indifferent because the blocking of streets by the barrows—it was a sit-down strike—prevented their getting to work to earn the money to buy the lilac. No one took any notice of this. It was pointed out—as things are pointed out, rather sharply—that

the public no longer had any need to go to work, their great-grandchildren would all either be wiped out or provided for in eighty years at the latest and to make way for that, the least the public could do was to die; quietly and quickly. Since the public could not get to work, they were slackers and a menace to the community.

A roving reporter (*in camera* variety) reported that, soul of loyalty that they were, the public, since they could not obey the official permission to purchase lilac for display in front-windows, was picking that which grew in its own back-gardens. This was clearly carrying things too far. Moreover, it appeared that the whole sudden approval of flowers was due to slight deafness caused to a minister by eating one of his own importations. It was not laburnum the public wanted, but Vernons. This mistake was most important to rectify, for of course football pools matter more than many other things. Accordingly, addresses both admonitory and apologetic were given over the wireless. But the Home and Light Programmes had become jealous of the Third and demanded that they, too, should be available only to a few of the public; no snobbery, they said—what was good enough for the Third was good enough for them. Consequently, what was intended as a Call to Football-pool Our Resources was heard only on a wavelength limited to Whitehall.

This had the unlooked-for effect of letting someone in that valley of the restless mind know what was happening.

He woke with a start and cried 'Call out the troops'. Hundreds of Civil Servants then appeared. He explained that he meant the Army; that was the way to break strikes—use men who could not mutiny to do the work their brothers and sisters refused to do. But the Army could not be found. It was disbanded. An alert but literal-minded junior then saw his opportunity and observed that as the New Army was the Civil Service, did not the remedy lie to hand, nay at our very feet? Could we move a step for fear of treading on the corns of one or another member of this vast, he might almost say ubiquitous, Army? And whereas in the old days we had always to our shame been caught with—he was sorry, it had been our pride to have—too small an army, so unimilitarily disposed

were we, was not now our chance, our Bevin-sent chance, to show our enemies—of which he need hardly remind the House, through our own unceasing efforts we had already far more in peace than we ever had in war—that it was a measure of our readiness to mishandle even our own problems that we had almost, if he might coin a phrase without taking it out of that war-horse's, his Hon. friend's, mouth opposite (Cries, in the modern mode, of 'smashing'), an *embarras de richesses*? In short, let the new army of Civil Servants be set to do what the old Army used to do, and he was sure nothing would happen.

And so it did. The Civil Service took charge of the woods. The trees became covered with memos, as if it were Arden—which it was, for the Servants. The lilac continued to come out, the public to be kept out and the barrow-boys stayed out. An experiment had been tried and, lest it fail, been made from the start, into just another matter of routine, like mentioning Kierkegaard in an article (which I hereby have done, so I should get a job or a good review any minute). . . .

Only the batsmen, who had first sent me to sleep, ceased to strike. But they, it is well known, are always reactionary. Besides, many of them were due to attend the weekly dance in the village hall, where the band had already broken my far from mid-summer night's dream with a chorus which seemed not a little indebted to State aid. The words ran, if the words of modern dance dirges can run, 'How Dare You Try To Risk Being Alive When One Of These Days You Must Die?'

Bottom, I said to myself, I am *not* even one-eighth assuaged for Itylus, but if you must be translated, I suppose it is into 'My target is to stagger peak load', which sounds the jargon of a drunken donkey to me, but presumably means, 'You can take a horse to the water as long as you blindfold him to the fact it isn't there.'

POEM

By BARBARA NORMAN

And say—I am not yet compassionate:
my pity is not yet conceived of love,
and hate is present in my grief—

Where the cow lay in the dry grasses,
her throat was thrown long and gentle,
head down, eyes closed, and she
shut out in labour,
laid out in loneliness,
laid on the edge of the world
as though a mountain would bring forth.

Compassion is to go down of a love
as a man before an unnamed god,
as the cow laid in the dry grasses, felled,
sweating on the edge of the world,
wonderful, terrible and withheld,
driven shining and dense back to her origin:

Who even after the going-down,
the giving-over of the bowed head,
and the calf passing from her,
comes back in self-relinquishment,
heaves back upon her gift of peace,

comes shining and dense back from her origin
in a great, sweet effort of remembrance,
and turns to the small, drenched,
shuddering fruit of her delivering
in measureless compassion, taking him in—

So say—I am not yet compassionate:
my pity is not yet conceived of love,
and hate is present in my grief.

STRINDBERG—TOWARDS AN INTERPRETATION

ELIZABETH SPRIGGE

‘**W**HERE am I? Where have I been? Is it spring, winter, or summer? In what century am I living, in what hemisphere? Am I young or old—man or woman—god or devil?...

Strindberg wrote these words late in life—in his trilogy *To Damascus*, and later still, in a new preface to an early autobiographical novel, he declared: ‘The personality of the author is just as much a stranger to me as to the reader—and just as unsympathetic.’

How can we answer what Strindberg himself was never able to answer? He invites us to dislike him, and his life and his work are so complicated and disturbing that they invite us to evade difficulty by affixing a number of ready-made labels. Labels change with the times: terms such as *paranoia simplex chronica* and *melancholia dæmomaniaca* give way to such as *introversion*, *œdipus complex* and *schizophrenia*, but the result is just as misleading when they are used to force a genius into a category.

Strindberg himself was a searcher. In *To Damascus* the Mother asks: ‘Will you never be tired of questioning?’ And he—the Stranger, the Writer—replies: ‘Never, for I yearn for the light.’ Anyone whose imagination has been touched by Strindberg’s poetry is bound to do the same, not to ignore but to swallow the repugnance he is offered—and continue the search. Then out of Strindberg’s work, dusty with the neglect, misunderstanding and misinterpretation of three generations, one treasure after another comes to light, sombre or brilliant, gold-veined mosaics out of which to build a portrait of the poet, the searcher, the fighter, the alchemist, the clairvoyant, the man with the haunted heart. And the light reveals something new, for the rays have had a whole century in which to

grow more penetrating since, in January, 1849, while Europe reeled with wars and revolutions, 'the son of a shipping agent and a maidservant awoke to consciousness.'

Johan August Strindberg was prematurely born. His parents, who had just legalized their union, were wretchedly poor, and already had three children. Over-sensitive from the first, Strindberg cries: 'I came too late!' or again, 'I came too soon. Perhaps I was born incomplete. . . . My parents did not want me, therefore I came into the world without a will of my own . . . a mistletoe which could not grow except upon a tree.'

'It's whispered in the family that I am a changeling . . . as a child I was always crying and didn't seem to take to life in this world.' The child cried, and the man lamented: 'Why is one born into this world an ignoramus, knowing nothing of its laws which one inadvertently breaks?' And again and again comes the refrain: 'I did not want to be made a fool of by life.' Again and again, for this was exactly what fate had in store for him—for the child 'born with a nostalgia for heaven' who 'knew that he was good and could do things', but who, as he grew up, felt—like the heavenly visitor in *The Dream Play*—his vision weakened by having eyes, his hearing dulled by having ears, his bright and airy thought bound in labyrinthine coils of flesh.

He craved for sunshine and gaiety, but all his first thoughts and impressions were accompanied by the tolling of bells for funerals; and, always hungry, his mind fixed in greedy horror on the black candy served at the mourners' feasts. Again and again the sweets of life turned black in his mouth. He yearned to love and learned to fear. Brothers, schoolfellows, father, teachers, king and God loomed up over him, menacing shadows each bigger than the last, ready to mock and torture and condemn, and his anguished cries too seldom brought help from his sickly mother being dragged slowly to the grave by one confinement after another. Nor was it only for himself that he feared. 'He felt a hurt to one of his own blood in all his nerves,' early evidence of the power which later made him able to experience even the death agonies of other people and feel restored when they were released by dying.

'Born to fear', and rating as man's greatest happiness 'to have

no enemies', Strindberg was strangely courageous from the first in his attacks on all that society held most sacred—church, law, learning, and family life—but then he did not feel that happiness was part of his destiny. One thing is certain. He was by nature a lover with 'the instinct to worship . . . the yearning to adore', but just as by his brutality and self-pity he forced people to hate him when he had rare gifts to offer them, so life itself constantly impressed on him its cruelty and corruption, and forced abuse from the lips that yearned to praise. The slavery of man, 'born under one set of laws and forced to live by another,' drove him to frenzy. Where man was free Strindberg could judge him; where he was bound reason was submerged in the torrent of his pity which drove him to a raw anger which came back upon himself. 'They hated me because I could not bear to see people suffering.' 'I told the poor and the women and the children to get free.'

The 'pale dark-eyed mother', in whom he saw his ideal of womanhood, failed him, first by neglect, then by dying while he was still a boy. Father, brother, sisters—all failed to come up to his romantic ideal, and most horrifying of all he fell short of it himself. Did he not love his mother? Yet at her very death-bed he found himself thinking of the gold ring she had left him. Was he not a Pietist—a member of that branch of the Lutheran faith which he later described as 'a kind of European Buddhism'? Yet he had injured, so he miserably believed, body and soul with the eroticism of puberty. And later, when he had cast Pietism from him, and was falling in love with first one woman and then another, it was only to discover—for he had to be his own Freud—that he was in love with his mother and would seek her all through his life. 'Am I a freak of nature? Am I perverted because I want to possess my mother? Is this an unconscious incest of the heart?' In his plays one character after another takes up the strain: 'My heart lies in a coffin with my mother . . . there lies my only heart.' 'Like all weary men he was consumed with longing for his life's origin—his mother.'

There were many other strains too, however, in the complicated and contradictory nature of the man who came to be

known as Europe's greatest misogynist. His dire poverty and his misfit with every class cut him off in youth from normal companionship, and later his own nature forbade it. His loneliness drove him deep into the exploration of his own ego, and there, as in the outer world, he found much to distrust. His opinions changed so swiftly and radically as he fell under one influence after another—Kierkegaard, Buckle, Nietzsche, Zola—that he doubted if he had a mind at all of his own, and even his peculiarities could be traced to hereditary or other causes that seemed to rob them of all originality. In turn as scholar, teacher, preacher, scientist, actor and journalist he tried to impress his family and the world, but in vain. Though he felt himself a Viking, half fighter, half mystic, for a long time his personality made no imprint. He could set his seal to nothing, and humiliation, which he had learnt as a boy to fear even more than hunger, caught up with him at every step. In spite of the sudden revelation while still a student that he was a poet and a playwright, his life continued kaleidoscopic—one shake and the pattern was changed. At once crude and hypersensitive, passionate and puritanical, he swung dizzily between the extremes of faith and atheism, idealism and realism, romanticism and naturalism, angelology and satanism. Sometimes he wondered if he had incarnated several different personalities, but even if he deplored his own inconstancy he held no brief for a fixed temperament either in the theatre or in life. 'I have drawn my characters vacillating, broken, mixtures of old and new . . .' he writes in the preface to *Miss Julie*—and he mocks at the bourgeois conception of a strong character—one who has accepted a certain rôle and so ceased to grow—although he was well aware of the difficulties of growing, of achieving anything new, for to him the most terrible thing about life was its reiterations and repetitions—'the going back and doing one's lessons over again.'

This complexity, and his will to break the vicious circle, make Strindberg's plays astonishingly alive, and like the Mohammedan weaver of carpets he leaves the pattern unfinished, and reaches no dead end of finality. His belief, however, that he himself had no enduring characteristics except 'mistrust and sensitiveness to pressure', was unfounded, for

in spite of all influences his art was his own, fresh, startling and prophetic. Far from being a hanger-on he was early in the field of Naturalism, which he brought almost to perfection in his play *The Father*, while later plays such as *Advent* were forerunners of the Expressionism which was to emerge in Germany a few years after his death. As for his latest visionary plays—*Easter*, *The Dream Play*, *To Damascus* and *The Ghost Sonata*—these are reproductions of dream states, drawings from the subconscious which a quarter of a century later might have been called surrealist. As Strindberg said himself in the preface to *The Dream Play*, in this state 'anything may happen: everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist; on an insignificant groundwork of reality imagination spins and weaves new patterns; a mixture of memories, experiences, unfettered fancies, absurdities and improvisations . . .'

When one reads *The Dream Play* nowadays—with its growing castle, its glazier, and its angelic visitor—Cocteau's *Orphée* comes to mind, while the lyrical play *Swan White* treats a well-known fairy story in a manner comparable to his film *La Belle et la Bête*. If Strindberg were produced with the same imaginative scope—'everything is possible and probable,' we would surely come nearer to interpreting the poet's plays. Realism was Strindberg's enemy. Naturalism he absorbed and used; realism led him into crude and petty autobiography thinly disguised as fiction, novels which give one interesting and terrible pictures of the haunted man, but little evidence of the artist. In his plays he translated this realism into many ways of capturing the truth, and to allow crude realism any part in the production of his dream plays is unpardonable. They are visions seen in a glass darkly—or brightly, seen perhaps in a crystal.

If one concentrates on the visual impression of these plays one sees the paintings of El Greco or of Blake, of Picasso, Dali—and among our English contemporaries of John Armstrong and John Tunnard. If one thinks of production the plastic quality of the plays turns one's mind to ballet—and Massine. And if one listens one may perhaps hear Stravinsky or César Franck, but one *feels* in the whole last phase of Strindberg's work the mystery of Beethoven's late quartets.

Ibsen had Strindberg's portrait hanging over his desk. He needed his madness. Strindberg wrote his poetic plays beneath the death mask of Beethoven; music is woven into their pattern and is part of their very texture.

Like the surrealist painters, Strindberg had a fine technique, but he took every liberty. He wrote poems in free verse dissolving into prose, and declared this to be the style of the future. He wrote historical plays, not only in prose where custom dictated verse, but in the modern idiom, and finding the Swedish vocabulary too small, he introduced into prose and verse alike harsh crude words, new-coined words of foreign extraction and expressions from ancient and modern languages. He broke all rules of syntax, prosody and taste, seizing lustfully on anything which would relieve the agony of his creative urge. 'My brain works incessantly, it grinds and grinds like a mill, and I cannot make it stop. I get no peace before I see my thoughts on paper, and then something new begins immediately, and there is the same misery. I write and write and do not even read through what I have written.'

No wonder he is difficult to translate. Writing at the time of his death one biographer says that the sound of Strindberg is like bell metal in Swedish while in German it resembles tin, and another that translated from German into English Strindberg is unrecognizable. All are agreed that whether translated straight from the original or through the German, as has too often been the case, he has not yet found an English interpreter, and some are of the opinion that he would be better rendered in 'American'. Certainly Eugene O'Neill was influenced by Strindberg's daring, and the American's untamed language might well clothe Strindberg's naturalist plays, but for his poetic work some new form must be found, both in translation and production. He himself fought passionately against 'the stage where all that is bourgeois has ever reigned supreme', and many of his ideas have since been used—not least by Thornton Wilder—but we have not yet dreamed his dreams.

Whether or not he had incarnated several personalities, Strindberg's experience was unlimited. 'I live, and I live the

manifold lives of all the human beings I describe, happy with those who are happy, evil with the evil ones, good with the good; I creep out of my own personality, and speak out of the mouths of children, of women, of old men: I am king and beggar, I have worldly power, I am the tyrant and the down-trodden hater of the tyrant; I hold all opinions and profess all religions; I live in all times and have myself ceased to be. This is a state which brings indescribable happiness.'

Usually when he speaks of his writing, Strindberg tells of this glorious delivery from his own personality, a sense of floating in space, and of his pen guided by a higher will than his own, but occasionally he has misgivings. 'What an occupation—to sit and flay one's fellow-beings, offer the skins for sale, and expect people to buy them . . . to go round spying out people's secrets, exposing the birthmark of one's best friend, using one's wife as a rabbit for vivisection.'

And there, of course, lay the inner tragedy of Strindberg's life. He could not forgive woman, and specially his own women, for shattering his ideal, and here one can but wish that realism had come to his private aid and prevented him from idealizing motherhood to the point where any other aspect of woman seemed a devil's disguise. To hate, despise and condemn woman was an agony to him, a profanation of the Madonna whose worship was the one religion he never forsook. An image of Our Lady carried through the streets of Paris added greatly to the attraction he felt in later life towards the Catholic Church. But a grim determination to lay bare the truth drove him on with the vivisection that turned the knife in his own heart, and a high sense of justice made him counter propaganda for women's emancipation, which originally he supported, with lurid pictures of men used by women for their own sensual and material gain, betrayed, humiliated and destroyed. This and other aspects of Strindberg show his kinship with D. H. Lawrence, whose life was rising as Strindberg's fell.

His first wife, Siri von Essen, was already married when he fell in love with her. Her golden curls, small feet, and the child at her side were his undoing; but although he paints her again and again in his plays and his stories as a debauched,

sadistic, treacherous slut, and although he went through divorce, 'that repulsive heap of offal,' to be rid of her, he never rooted out his love for her. He married again twice, and fell in love many more times, but when, during his own last illness, Siri died, he put on mourning that was no pretence.

Only his greater mother never failed him—nor did he fail her. Each contact with Nature renewed his strength, and he studied her mysteries with devoted patience. Perhaps only when writing of nature or of childhood was he free from torment.

His marriage with Siri lasted fifteen years. Inevitably they tortured one another. Yet afterwards she thanked him for seven happy years, and if he had little peace before, he had less after he left her and the children to whom he was fanatically devoted. His one link with normality was broken; he whirled in a vortex of despair and dissipation which sucked him into his second marriage with the Austrian Frida Uhl, from which again after she had borne him a child he struggled free—free from 'the beautiful gaoler who spied on my soul day and night and guessed my most secret thoughts'.

Strindberg was now in the early forties, free from all human ties and potentially free from penury, for although reviled in Sweden, he had become a fashionable author in Berlin and in Paris. *The Father* was exactly the play André Antoine needed for his Théâtre Libre, and Zola wrote a sympathetic preface for the French edition, while his novel, *The Confessions of a Fool*, in which he horribly analyses the love-hatred of his first marriage, was avidly read wherever it could be got.

His success in Naturalism, however, did not satisfy him, and his very freedom left him exposed to other dangers. Writing had never been his sole ambition, and now he returned to science in order 'to eliminate the barriers between matter and what is called spirit'. In his room in the Quartier Latin of Paris he performed many experiments—of which the most ambitious was the making of gold, an achievement discredited by the chemists, but acclaimed by the French alchemists. Strindberg had now begun his descent into hell—the Inferno which he minutely describes in the book of that title compiled from his diaries. His world grew alive with forces the laws of

nature could not explain. Every moment of his days and nights was haunted, and he fled in mortal terror from one place to another, trying to escape here from his demons, there from the friends who would have had him shut up as insane. When at last help came, it too was from another world. First Balzac's *Séraphita* fell into his hands, and after that introduction to Swedenborg it was not long before Strindberg read 'the Swedish Buddha' himself. In *Arcana Cœlestia* he found that Swedenborg had gone through the same torments as himself, and had recognized them as part of a divine plan, the purgatory through which some souls must pass if they were to ascend to a higher plane. Here was salvation. 'If only I had read Swedenborg before I would have understood. . . .'

So Strindberg rose again, cured of his atheism, a clairvoyant, a mystic and a poet. His sensitiveness increased; he was often afraid, often unhappy, but he could not doubt. In his own words it was a time of 'light after darkness, new production—with Faith, Hope and Charity regained—and absolute certainty'. Events now had for him a deeper underlying meaning; his theatre of life was peopled with beings from more than one world, so should his plays be. His laboratory was his own heart where understanding unfolded like a lotus, like the great chrysanthemum on the growing castle in *The Dream Play*. The grace that he had received in spite of his sinful pride tempered his violence, and compassion for mankind largely took the place of hatred and contempt. Nevertheless he remained in everyday life morose, querulous and exacting, and life paid him out again with one of her intolerable repetitions. To play the Lady in his penitential drama *To Damascus*, he chose the young Norwegian actress, Harriet Bosse. He fell in love with her, married her, she bore him a child, and the marriage broke up on the rocks of domesticity, although this time the couple parted with less bitterness and recrimination than in the case of his former marriages.

Thrown back upon himself plays, poems, stories and essays burst from his pen, and he was able to realize one of his dearest ambitions, the founding of an Intimate Theatre of his own. Now he could have an audience in close rapport with the players, and be rid of all the bourgeois trappings—realistic

scenery, footlights and conventional make-up. He wrote several Chamber Plays of few characters and concentrated action specially for this theatre, among them the fascinating *Ghost Sonata*, and he took a great interest in the players, writing them many letters (for he was personally shy) of advice, thanks and encouragement.

The Intimate Theatre continued for three years, then failed financially, but Strindberg himself was now established in his own country. Even another unfortunate repetition—an attack on literary Stockholm in his novel, *The Black Flags*, which was even more libellous than his first novel, *The Red Room*, did not stop the Swedish people from honouring him as their master. He returned to journalism to write forceful articles in the socialist cause, and on his sixty-third birthday he found that he had become a national hero. The Stockholm theatres were proudly performing his plays, and laurel-wreathed portraits of him were on view throughout the city—his city which he had always loved above all others.

On the night of that anniversary in January, 1912, Strindberg stood on his balcony and acknowledged the cheers of the crowd, but he was already mortally ill of a cancer. His amazing vitality had ebbed at last. 'Usually I get up punctually at seven, take a walk and hurry home, driven by an irresistible longing for work. Now this restlessness had left me; I felt my life-work was completed. I had said all I wished to say, and my unprinted manuscripts were put away in perfect order.'

Four months later the son of a servant and a shipping agent, the enemy of society, was followed to his grave by one of the biggest processions ever seen at the funeral of a private person. Students, artists, politicians, aristocrats and artisans were there in their thousands to salute the passing of the giant who had held up the darkness of the human heart for all to see—in a superhuman effort to attract the light.

ELIZABETH SPRIGGE is the author of several novels—*The Old Man Dies*, *Castle in Andalusia*, *The Raven's Wing*, etc.—and in collaboration with Claude Napier has translated some dozen books from the Swedish, including some and one play by Strindberg.

A SONG OF THE SOUL

(From the Spanish of St. John of the Cross, 1549-1591.)

by E. HERISSON

In the darkness of night
on fire with the anguish of love,
O lovely adventure! Unseen
I went out,
for my home lay at rest.

In darkness and safety, disguised,
by the small hidden stairway,
O lovely adventure! In the dark
and by stealth,
for my home lay at rest.

In the secret, fortunate night,
unseen, seeing naught,
without light, without guide
save the flame
which burned in my heart.

By that I was led,
more sure than by noon-glare,
to the place I desired,
for I knew
that no other would venture.

O night, both teacher and learner,
O night more loving than dawn,
night which will merge the loved
with the lover,
the loved to Belovèd transformed!

POEM

My heart, a flower which I guarded
for him, and him only, was opened,
therein he lay harboured and sleeping,
and fanned.
by the life-giving boughs of the cedar.

When the air from the tower
softly lifted his hair,
his gentle hand touched me
to wound me:
all feeling departed.

Remaining, forgetting, I faced
the Belovèd. Everything ceased,
and abandoning self, I abandoned my fear,
forgotten,
among the white lilies.

PIN MONEY

by OSWELL BLAKESTON

Kind lad, in charity
Farthings for pins!
There are pins to stick
In dead men's feet—
Pray let them walk no more;
There are pins I need
To fasten down
The eyelids of the dead—
Peace from your living grace.
Sweet lad, in charity
Pennies for pins!

LAURA BASSI (1711-1778)

DOCTOR OF NATURAL PHILOSOPHY

WINIFRED GRAHAM WILSON

When Laura Bassi gave public evidence of her learning, with a view to being granted a degree, the principal personages of Bologna knew not what 'to value most, the modesty of her quiet manner, or the profundity of her intellect'.—Cited by Edith E. Coulson James.

Bologna must have been a fascinating place to live in when Laura Bassi was a little girl. Many of the houses, ancient even then, were 'built with arched Cloysters towards the street, under which one could walk dry in the greatest raine'. These were the 'Pallaces of Gentlemen, stately on the inside, but with little show on the outside',¹ and Laura lived in just such a house herself.

There was the University, claiming to be the first one founded in Europe, with all its ceremonies and tradition of learning. Names familiar to us as belonging to the great in the world's history, were familiar to Laura too, for her people loved learning and culture, so that she early learnt to read not only Italian literature but Latin authors as well. Curiously enough, she showed too a strangely unusual interest in science and mathematics. So marked was this interest that it influenced the whole course of her life.

As a child Laura would hear of Dante and Petrarch, 'of Boccaccio, Copernicus, Erasmus, Luther, Ariosto, and Tasso, for all in their day studied in this Alma Mater Studiorum.'² She would hear too of a characteristic feature of Bologna University: that it had 'always been honourably distinguished in that it accorded equal terms to women students with the men. From the Middle Ages there had been women professors who filled its chairs with very great distinction, the earliest

¹ Fynes Maryson's *Itinerary*, Spring, 1594.

² *Bologna, Its History, Antiquities, and Art*, Edith E. Coulson James, Henry Frowde, 1909.

being Bitisia Gozzadini, born in 1209, who earned *la laurea* ¹ in both Civil and Canon Law'.² During the following century two other women, Novella and Bettina Calderini the daughters of the distinguished legal Doctor Giovanni d'Andrea Calderini, were 'famed for their knowledge of law when quite young. Giovanni was as ambassador, frequently absent on important business, and it is an historical fact that on these occasions one of his daughters took his place and discharged his duties with great efficiency. Of Novella, it is recorded that she was so beautiful that she was wont to cover her face with a thick veil when she ascended the Professional chair, lest her beauty should distract the attention of her hearers'.³ It was in her day that Petrarch was sent to continue his legal studies at Bologna, but the law held no appeal for him, and he turned his attention to the classics.

Among the *artisti* were many famous women. One of them was 'a virgin named Isabella Sirani' ⁴ living when Evelyn visited Bologna 'who painted many excellent pieces' and who could imitate 'Guido so well that many skilful artists were deceived'.⁵ Another was Anna Morandi, a contemporary of Laura Bassi. She studied both drawing and modelling and she made, in order to help her husband, a series of anatomical models in wax for the *Istituto delle Scienze* which were said to exhibit perfect truth to nature and exquisite finish.

In connection with the great interest shown in anatomy* at Bologna it is worth noting that, when Laura was in her early twenties 'the anatomy lectures were a great public function. The *funzione* lasted ten days, with lectures both morning and afternoon. The authorities were present at the first and last of these lectures. The time fixed was just after the Festa of S. Antonio in the Carnival vacation. The Cardinal Legate, the Gonfaloniere, the Anziani and ordinary citizens, among them many ladies, were accustomed to be present'.⁶

¹ *Bologna, Its History, Antiquities, and Art* Edith E. Coulson James, Henry Frowde, 1909.

² Degree of doctor, with its insignia of book, ring, and beretta.

³ Edith E. Coulson James.

⁴ More correctly *Elizabetta Sirani*.

⁵ Evelyn's diary, entry for 1645.

⁶ Edith E. Coulson James.

There were so many beautiful things in Bologna: churches, towers, palaces, the university buildings of the *Accademia Benedettina*, and of the *Archiginnasio*, pictures and statues too. All would form part of Laura's environment, as would the beauties connected with Catholic religious ritual, for Bologna was one of the Papal states, and strict orthodoxy was still the order of the day. Perhaps what Laura liked best was the procession of the *Madonna di San Luca*, for this Madonna was considered the special protectress of the city, and to her the citizens have constantly turned to ask for aid in times of trouble.

Homely things too would form part of Laura's life: the market places and the shops. Perhaps she would agree with Evelyn who noted 'the great quantities of Parmegiano cheeses, botargo, caviare, etc.' ¹ which, in his opinion, made 'some of the shops perfume the streets with no agreeable smell'. Or perhaps Laura would like the smell of the cheeses and the fishy odour of the sausage and caviare, for it must not be forgotten that the famous Bologna sausage, in spite of its degeneration into the humble 'polony' was originally made from mullet or tunny roe, and was considered a delicacy fit for a king.

Certainly the Bologna Senate thought so, for when, early in 1717, James Stuart, the Old Pretender, found refuge in Bologna to recover from the disastrous effects of the 1715 Rebellion, they presented him with four cases of wine, various domestic utensils, and a case of foodstuffs which included :—

- 2 Bologna sausage ²
- 2 *pyramidi* of butter
- 4 loaves of sugar
- 4 capons
- 4 chickens

Laura would hear of this gift made to the man whom the Senate styled *Jacopo Rè della Gran Bretagna*, though, at the time, she would be little more than five years old. She would hear too of the grand reception accorded by the grateful James to the Senate's ambassadors in the summer of the same year.

¹ Entry for 1645.

² Or, in Italian, Baccili di Mortadelli.

Two years or so later another event occurred which would stir the heart of any little girl. A charming Princess came to Bologna from a country far away. She was Clementina Sobieski of Poland, and she had escaped from Innsbruck, where she had been detained by the Emperor at the wish of George I of England. When she got to Bologna there was no prince for her to marry, for James, her affianced husband, had had to go away again. He was far away in Spain in connection with a further attempt to gain the British crown.

Clementina, as a result, was married by proxy, in a private house in Bologna, one of those very houses with so little show on the outside and so much of state within. This house was in the Via Larga, near to the church of Santa Maria Maggiore. To it she was conducted by the Papal Legate, Cardinal Origo, who gave her a most courteous welcome. But the actual marriage was solemnized by an English priest, and a picture of the stately ceremony is preserved in the *Insidia* of the *Anziani*.¹

Soon Clementina went on to Rome, where she stayed for three months in the Convent of the Ursulines. In September, however, of the same year (1719) she was able to meet her bridegroom in person, after which she stayed with him in Rome for a time. The attempt to gain the crown had been an utter failure, but its story is worth telling here, for though there might seem to be no connection between it and Laura Bassi, there is a connecting thread which the discerning can clearly trace if they care to take the trouble.

'It was a quarrel with England that gave Spain the idea of striking a blow for the restoration of the Stuarts. The great Cardinal Alberoni, the Spanish dictator, undertook to support a rising on the west coast of England, but it was suggested that in the Scottish Highlands there should be a rising of the clans at the same time, with men and arms supplied by Spain.'² The English invasion was a fiasco, for

¹ A special council, founded in 1228, of twenty-four representatives of the guilds of arms and of arts—reduced to twelve in 1245. From the late fourteenth century onwards, the term of office was always two months (James).

² *The Maxtones of Cultoquhey*, E. Maxtone Graham, The Moray Press, Edinburgh, 1935.

'a shattering storm scattered the Spanish ships on their way from Cadiz with troops and supplies. Every single ship was beaten back'.¹

The Highland rising was equally a failure. A tiny Spanish garrison, made its headquarters on a small island, Eilean Donan, off the wild West Highland coast. The main body of troops was on the mainland, and they awaited the attack at Glenshiel. 'Outmanned and outmanœuvred, the upshot was hardly in doubt from the first, and soon the little Jacobite army was in retreat.'¹ This was early in the July of 1719, and by the autumn of that year, after first taking to the mountains, many Highlanders had fled to the Continent, some of them to join James for a time. Among these was Mungo Maxtone of Cultoquhey, whose home in Perthshire looked 'southwards across a wide strath to the line of the Ochils, while at his back the hills rose into moorland and broke at last into the wild tumbled masses of the Grampians'.¹

About a year and a half after Glenshiel, a son was born to Clementina in Rome. This son was Prince Charlie, and he was regarded by the Italians as being rightfully Prince of Wales. Before he was two years old 'James and his wife made a stay in Bologna, occupying the *Casa Belloni*, the palace of a wealthy citizen . . . From this time on to 1729 there is evidence that James and his family were frequently in Bologna'.² Eventually, they made their home in *Palazzo Ranuzzi-Cospi*, which was thought to be much more worthy of them. Prince Charlie seems to have been greatly loved and admired by the Bolognese. Ghiselli, a chronicler of the day, describes him as *molto spiritoso, e di bellezza straordinaria*. He 'appears to have begun to take part in the gaieties of Bolognese society at a very early age',² for when he was scarcely six years old he was present at a ball, and even danced with the Contessa Pepoli who was the bride of the occasion. So much did the scene appeal to the Bolognese that a picture in the Anzani Insignia was actually painted to record it.

'James left Bologna on 31st January, 1729, but Clementina

¹ *The Maxtones of Cultoquhey*, E. Maxtone Graham, The Moray Press, Edinburgh, 1935.

² Edith E. Coulson James.

and Prince Charlie remained there till May . . . At the end of that month Clementina set out for Rome, and it is believed that the courtly Bolognese never again saw the charming Princess to whom they had accorded such stately hospitality.' ¹ But they would remember her, and among those who remembered would be Laura Bassi. For more than eleven years the name Stuart had been familiar to the city, and for six of those years Prince Charlie had lived there. Perhaps Laura too, like Ghizelli, would consider the little boy to be *molto spiritoso e di bellezza straordinaria*. For unusually lovely he must have been. Proof of this is still to be found in Scotland, where 'handed down through the generations among the family valuables at Cultoquhey and the most treasured possession to-day, is an exquisite miniature of the child Prince Charles Edward—the best of all the portraits known of him as a boy, gay, princely, and charming, looking out fearlessly on a world to be conquered'.² When we consider that James Stuart sent this miniature to Mungo Maxtone either in 1729 or 1730, it is easy to realize that it portrays the very Prince Charlie that Laura knew, when he was eight or nine years of age.

But by that time Laura was seventeen or eighteen years of age, and she was progressing at a rapid rate in the subjects she loved best. When she was not quite sixteen, news of the death of Newton had reached Bologna, an event which was felt keenly by all those working in science and philosophy at the schools and colleges of the University. Laura, by that time, must have made great headway in general and experimental physics, unusual subjects even to-day for a woman to study. The regulations of the University were very stringent as to the prescribed course of study necessary for obtaining a degree. In medicine and allied subjects five years or more were necessary, while in law as much as eight years might have to be put in. So that when we learn that Laura Maria Caterina Bassi had *la laurea* of the Doctorate in Natural Philosophy conferred upon her in the May of 1732, we know that right from when she was fifteen or so she must have been working hard in mathematics and experimental science.

¹ Edith E. Coulson James.

² E. Maxtone Graham.

It is only by considering the great names of the period, as well as those of an earlier day, in this connection, that we can even begin to realize the surprising range of Laura's studies. Newton had opened the eyes of scientific inquirers on many matters: the theory of gravitation and the spectrum of light, for instance. From his work on the spectrum he had been able to demonstrate the true nature of colour, and from thence to work on the improvement of the telescope invented by Kepler. He had worked on liquid and gas pressure. He had calculated the mass of the sun and the planets and estimated the density of the earth. He had discovered the binomial theorem and postulated the principles of the differential and integral calculus.

Much of this material was eventually to be studied by Laura Bassi. 'Two dissertations on the laws of hydraulics and mechanics testify to her knowledge in these departments.'¹ So many workers in this field who lived just before Laura's day had made discoveries that she, in her turn, would inquire into. 'The law of the spring of the air, for instance, was independently discovered by Boyle and Hooke in England and by Mariotte in France . . . In England it is called Boyle's law, though the credit is probably due to Hooke,'² but on the Continent it is known as Mariotte's law, as there is some evidence for the belief that Mariotte made the discovery first of all.

Galileo too had worked on fluid pressure. 'In the social circumstances of his generation, one of the pressing technological problems which attracted attention was how to pump water out of mines, and fresh air into them.'¹ To Aristotle, it was enough to know that 'nature abhors a vacuum', but miners knew to their cost that for some mysterious reason that abhorrence ceased after a point, for however much they worked they could never get their pumps to raise water more than about 33 ft. Hence it was that in the section of Agricola's sixteenth-century treatise on the ventilating and draining of mines an elaborate diagram was given to show pumps used in relays, for in his and 'Galileo's time it was

¹ Edith E. Coulson James.

² *Science for the Citizen*, Lancelot Hogben, Allen and Unwin, 1938.

respectable to know what every miner knew'¹ and what, surprisingly enough, Laura Bassi must have known before she was twenty years old. Newcomen, in this country, was still working on this problem of pumping as Laura grew into girlhood. He had achieved success in Cornish mines, so that later the Newcomen engine was introduced as a pumping agent into Scotland where it was the means of extending coal mining both in Fifeshire and the Lothians.

The behaviour of falling bodies had interested the minds of many inquirers since long before Aristotle's day. It seemed so obvious that Aristotle must be right when he taught that 'a body is heavier than another which in an equal bulk moves downward more quickly'. Yet he was wrong, and it remained for Galileo to prove by his experiments from the Leaning Tower of Pisa that all bodies fall to the ground with a uniformly accelerated motion. But Bologna had its leaning towers, probably six hundred years old or so, when Laura was a child. They still stand, those towers, the *Torre degli Asinelli* and the *Torre degli Garisendi*, the *Asinelli* the taller of the two. Perhaps when Laura was taken on the hills surrounding the city, she would, like Evelyn, see Bologna 'built like a ship whereof the Asinelli tower might go for the mainmast'.²

Galileo, like all scientific workers of the period, worked on a variety of subjects. He showed that all bodies have weight, even air and other gases. He discovered that 'when a small weight swings through a small angle, at a fixed distance from a fixed point, its time of swing is constant'¹ and so established the principle of the pendulum. He worked on the telescope, he even invented a primitive species of thermometer.

So might one go on, naming investigator after investigator, who each had his influence on Laura's life. There is space only, however, to mention a few workers in other spheres of investigation who were coming to the fore in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Many of these workers were Italians, and they succeeded strangely enough, though they lived in a time which was one of apparent decadence for universities of their country. In 1681, for instance, the number

¹ Lancelot Hogben.

² Evelyn, entry in diary for 1645.

of students at Bologna was under two hundred, and in 1747, it had sunk to barely a hundred and fifty. Yet this apparent decay masked a period of germination, for newer subjects were gaining in value, and men of intelligence and powers of research were giving much time and attention to them, so that in 1712 the *Istituto delle Scienze* was founded in Bologna.

Among these workers was Marcello Malpighi successively Professor in Anatomy at Pisa, Messina, and Bologna. His work on both animal and vegetable microscopic anatomy showed wonderful powers of observation and deduction. Malpighi was able to reveal not only the finest vessels in the circulatory system, the capillaries, but to show blood actually flowing through them. He discovered those tiny tubes, called 'tracheæ' which penetrate to the innermost tissues of insects, so that oxygen can diffuse into the deepest regions of the body without the intervention of a blood stream. He made plain the microscopic structure of the kidney and because of his connection with that structure a certain flask-shaped swelling, richly supplied with a tuft of small blood vessels, and playing an important part in the renal function, is still known as the Malpighian body or capsule.

Natural Philosophy was able, in its wide borders, to receive yet another subject: the newly developing science of electricity. Names like Galvani, a professor at Bologna who worked on animal electricity; and of Volta, who developed a theory of current electricity along purely physical lines, come to mind. Natural Philosophy indeed had links in almost every direction and so it is no wonder that medicine was made to connect itself with it. This is how it happened that Laura Bassi came to know Dr. Giuseppe Veratti, a physician and professor in the Bologna Philosophical College. She married him in 1738, and bore him twelve children.

None of Laura's children followed in her footsteps, and only five of them outlived her. Her keen interest in science and her work on experimental mechanics had a strong influence, however, on one of her young cousins. This was Lazaro Spallanzani, who was born at Scandiano in Modena. After some years at the Jesuit College at Reggio he became a student at Bologna, where he was actually one of Laura's pupils. 'He

was perhaps the most truly original experimental biologist of his age. He held successively two important chairs at Reggio and Pavia, travelled and corresponded far afield, receiving many tokens of esteem and recognition throughout Europe.¹ His work included experiments on 'the role of the digestive juices', 'a wide survey of the respiratory organs of the lower animals,'¹ and a series of remarkable investigations¹ 'on the tactile sensations of bats which can thread their way through a network of strings when blinded', Spallanzani was the first worker to carry out experiments on artificial insemination. 'He injected into the vagina of a bitch, says Tourdes, "nineteen grains of semen taken from a dog of the same breed" and "had, after the ordinary time of gestation, the satisfaction of seeing her bring forth several whelps, likewise of the same breed".'¹ Much of this work was done in Laura Bassi's lifetime, with her interest and companionship to give it momentum and speed it on its way.

It is strange, when we consider Laura's remarkable life, that we hear so little of her; for she managed to achieve what so many women long to do to-day, yet fail in doing; to combine great learning with love of home and family. She simply took the combination for granted and lived her life to the full. 'In judgment, acumen, and the lucid grace of her teaching she equalled the fame of the most distinguished Professors. People even came from distant countries to hear her . . . Yet she was an excellent wife and mother, devoting herself to the government of her family and educating her children herself.'²

On the evening of 19th February, 1778, Laura Bassi went to a meeting of the *Accademia Benedettina*, for though her health was rather infirm, she still took an active part in the University life of Bologna. The next day she died and the citizens mourned her loss publicly. 'She was buried in the church of Corpus Domini, arrayed in Doctor's robes, and an inscription in her honour was placed on the tomb.'² Some time later, the ladies of Bologna raised a tablet to her memory in the famous *Istituto delle Scienze*, founded, it may be recalled, only a few months after Laura was born.

Far more vivid memorials than these, however, still remain

¹ Lancelot Hogben.

² Edith E. Coulson James.

LAURA BASSI (1711-1778)

of Laura Bassi: illustrative of her University distinctions are three pictures in the *Insignia* of the *Anziani*—those same *Insignia* which contain eight miniatures of incidents connected with the ill-fated exiled Stuarts.

STANIS PIT

by NESSIE DUNSMUIR

Behind my head the falling sun
reddens the rim of the pit's dark wheels.
The night-wind rising in sadness stills
the children's late cries from the green.
The dark falls down. The cables whine.

I walk beside my younger brother
past the fire-doors towards the edge
where men wait ready for the cage.
In the darkness dropping its silent name
my fear falls past the night-started men.

The children play by the whirring wheels.
Up happy years their glances drift.
Do games grow to that waiting shaft
and make belief those galleries shine?
The cage falls like a guillotine.

The story opposite, won First Prize in the Arthur Markham Memorial Prize Competition, 1946, open to the miners of Britain. It is here published for the first time and acknowledgment is due to Sheffield University, sponsors of the Competition. The author, John Norman, was born in 1905. He worked in a Leicestershire coal mine, now lives in a cottage in Kent and in his spare time runs a two-acre fruit-farm.

BIRTHDAY PARTY

JOHN NORMAN

‘**T**H’ cloth, Bill!’ Ada shouted. ‘Tak’ care on it, shall yer?’

Her husband had spilt a few drops of beer on the borrowed tablecloth. He made a clownish grimace, then calmly went on filling up the glasses.

The meal had ended. The front parlour was already hot and stuffy, reeking of tobacco and strong scent. A blue mist of smoke hung above the two tables merged under the single white cloth. Up in the mist the gas flared and popped and fluttered.

Ada thought of the aspidistra. She got up and fetched some water and moistened its earth.

Grea’gran filled the seat of honour by the fire. A smell of hot varnish rose from his chair-back. He dabbed his watery eyes again and again with his red bandanna; the atmosphere pricked them like needles. He felt unhappy, embarrassed; yet a faint smile bent the thin grey lips below his straggling moustache. He must be polite. The party was in his honour. But he was very tired, and he wanted to go to bed. He stared at his half-empty glass of beer, not daring to look at the selected dozen of his relations gathered round the tables, for he was afraid of showing what he thought of them. He had an affection for Jenny, his seven-year-old great-granddaughter, and a tolerable liking for her father, Bill, who was also his grandson; for the others he had no more love than he felt for the chairs they sat on. But Jenny kept a faint glow smouldering in his heart.

Old William, intent on proposing Grea’gran’s health, thumped the table with a beer bottle. The gas roared in the sudden hush. William, whose broad waistcoat bore the ancient stains of much elusive food, laboured to his feet. He licked his lips and looked down the table, and the eyes of father and son met. Then Grea’gran stared again at his glass.

BIRTHDAY PARTY

Ninety years, said William, was a long time. He had known the old boy for sixty-eight of them, and that was a long time, too. . . . When he lapsed into personal reminiscence, the talk and laughter broke out again. William was an old bore.

Grea'gran knew that some of the young people were getting tipsy. He hated drunkenness. He, too, liked his glass of beer, but he had never been drunk in his life. It distressed him, particularly, to see a young woman letting herself become a comic spectacle for insensitive males. To-night there was much giggling and silly talk, and things were getting beyond the face-slapping stage. He was a little deaf and his sight was dim, but he knew quite well what was going on.

He was a countryman; he did not like town ways, and he erred in judging all townsfolk by the example of his own family. A carpenter in his native village until his eighty-second year, he had then come to live with Bill and Ada in their grey house at the smoky end of the town. It was not a happy arrangement. Ada looked on the old man as an undeserved burden, hardly balanced by what she was able to make out of him. She was tall and thin; an untidy mass of raven hair, streaked with grey, fell at the nape of her neck. Her eyes were small, set close beside a beaky nose. Her mouth, hard-lipped, yet with a sulky droop at the corners, never smiled. She had brought up five children, and was now bringing up Jenny, who had come late and, like most of the others, uninvited.

Ada often complained that the child was trouble enough without having to put up with a doddering old man who just sat and sucked his filthy pipe, staring at the grate. Whereupon Grea'gran would pocket the offending thing, which was usually empty, anyhow.

Bill, however, had a deep respect for him, added to a sense of duty as the eldest grandson. He was a motorman at Marlhill Colliery. Amiable and easy-going, he habitually made light of his wife's troubles. He would coolly read the newspaper while she, in her tired nasal voice, tried to convince him of the self-sacrificial nature of her existence; then, during a pause, he would blandly ask if the chap had been to change the batteries, or if she knew that Joe's wife was in for another. She threw a colander at him once; he deftly caught it, mocked at polishing

it with his forearm, and put it with exaggerated care on the table. He usually returned from the club at supper-time with stout for his wife and beer for Grea'gran. He never sulked. He was lean and hollow-cheeked, a younger edition of Grea'gran without the white moustache, but he could drink with anyone and be none the worse except for a marked coarsening of his outlook. Drink produced a stanchless flow of dirty stories. Grea'gran, strait-laced as a churchwarden—he had been one for exactly forty years—hated those stories.

' . . . them was the days—beer at tuppence a pint, an' no income tax.' William's flat voice droned down the table during a momentary lull. The remark earned a cacophony of cheers. Armfuls of new quart bottles, provided out of the kitty, were brought in from the kitchen, and the parade of empties by the gramophone grew impressive.

The gaslight shuddered for a moment, and its fluctuations gave a macabre effect to the laughing faces. Bill stared at the globe, his mouth hanging open; he was rehearsing a limerick, not thinking of the poor quality of the town's gas. Sniggering, he recited it. For each obscene word he substituted an irrelevant one, without rhyme or scansion. Everybody laughed except William, just ending his speech, and Ada, worrying about the tablecloth borrowed from the woman next door, and Grea'gran, still wearing his faint smile. Even Jenny laughed, although she had not understood a word of it.

William thumped the table again, raised his glass and toasted Grea'gran. The gathering drank, then clamoured for a speech from the old man.

Jenny sat at the corner next to her great-grandfather, her hand in his. 'Say summat, Grea'gran,' she whispered in his ear. 'Please, Grea'gran.'

He carefully wiped his moustache, then cleared his throat. 'Thank 'e all very much,' he said in his slow, reedy voice. 'I'm no speechifier like my son William, so I'll jes' say, "thank 'e." An' I reckon it'll be my little Jenny's bedtime, so her'd better go an' get her beauty sleep.'

'Tha's right, Jenny,' said Ada. 'Kiss Grea'gran good-night an' run up to bed.'

The child, eyes wide with pained amazement, stared at

Grea'gran. It was so unlike him to spoil her fun; he had always taken her part. She had been enjoying the party, and Mum had forgotten her.

'Dunna' sit there ogling him. Get on up wi' yer,' said Ada.

The child pulled her hand out of Grea'gran's and started to cry. She ran out of the room and up the stairs.

More quart bottles were brought in. William dropped off to sleep, and some one woke him by opening a bottle under his nose. A girl got a sausage-roll stuffed down her neck, so Ada put the remaining food on the sideboard. Bill stealthily drank his niece's beer as well as his own, and threatened to repeat the joke six times in the next hour. The story of the Scotsman and the prostitute was told; Bill capped it with what the vicar said to the housemaid.

'Lift yer glasses, shall yer, an' let's get th' cloth off? An' Grea'gran looks tired. He'd better go to bed.' Ada rarely spoke directly to the old man when others were present.

Bill agreed. 'Ar, looks proper done up. Go to bed an' sleep it off, Grea'gran.'

'Can yer get there by yersen, Dad?' William asked.

'I can manage, thank 'ee,' said Grea'gran.

They wished him good-night and good luck, and promised to come to his hundredth birthday party. He escaped into the passage. The air was cold, and heavy with gas fumes. A burner, turned down very low, gobbled at him from the wall. But it was good to be out of that room.

He took his candle from the shelf and lit it; then he went slowly upstairs, using both hands on the banisters, scraping the candlestick along the rail. It seemed harder work than usual, but at last he reached his little back room below the three steps down. His bed had not been made, for Ada had been too busy getting ready for his party. He sat on the chair to rest.

If they wanted to come to his hundredth birthday party, they were going to be disappointed. He had no desire to live another ten weary years. He had believed, right from boyhood, that he would reach his ninetieth birthday. He had achieved that ambition, but it gave him no satisfaction at all. The driving force that had filled his years of retirement now seemed worthless. He did not want to live any longer. He was too tired.

His thoughts became blurred. He leaned his head against the wall, but the damp plaster, with its mouldy faded paper, chilled his scalp. He must get to bed.

He undressed very slowly, for he found it unusually tiring. Yet he folded up his clothes with the same care that he had taken all his life. His flannel nightshirt felt clammy; the cold air on his chest and back was not half so bad as the touch of that nightshirt.

There was just enough water in the ewer to fill his tumbler. Flecks of dust swam in it like small fish, but by him they were unseen. He got into bed and drew his knees up. Through half-closed eyes he watched the dancing shadow of his hunched body—a shadow like a hill, cast on the wall by the flickering candle on the chair.

He did not feel sleepy. The candle was companionable, and he delayed snuffing it. He lay in bed and listened to the muffled shrieks and shouts, the guffaws and giggles from the front room downstairs. Some of the revellers were singing, mournfully, like people in the streets on Saturday night. The hubbub reminded him of the noise of the screens at Marlhill Colliery, away across the allotments, when the coal was being wound.

The candle burnt low. He heard the buzzers of distant collieries, sad, urgent, blowing for the nightmen. He waited for the Marlhill whistle, always a full minute after the rest. It came—at first a steamy splutter, rising in crescendo to a shrill tremor of breathlessness.

The clamour downstairs suddenly got much louder. He heard the thump of overturning chairs, the scream of casters, and Ada's voice imploring people to mind something or other. Then came a scuffle in the passage, followed by the slamming of the front door. The house shuddered; Grea'gran's calendar, a Christmas present from Jenny, fell slap on its edge on the floor.

'Grea'gran!' cried a frightened voice. 'Grea'gran!'

'Come in, me dear,' he said. 'Come on in an' shut th' door.'

Jenny ran in and buried her face in his pillow. 'Oh, what are they doin'?' she sobbed.

He stroked her hair with his thin bloodless hand. Then he

opened the bedclothes and drew her inside. 'Thou munna' get cold, me dear.'

She lay within his arm, snuggling up close to him. She stopped crying and sighed. Then she went fast to sleep.

Grea'gran stared at the ceiling. He felt wide awake, but he did not mind. He liked to feel this soft warm child against his tepid body.

The candle flickered, flared, went out. He turned his head and watched the fading glow of the wick. Its pungent smell hung in the air. He thought of his own life as a fading glow. But, now, his satisfaction was slightly less. Who would look after Jenny?

*

*

*

He must have fallen asleep. He woke up to find the room filled with laughing, swaying people. His grandson held a candlestick at a slant; the grease spattered on the floor.

'You wicked ol' man!' Bill sniggered. 'We come t'say goo'-night, an' we catch you abed wi' yer grea'-granddaughter. You wicked ol' man!'

Grea'gran raised himself on his elbow, and the child stirred in her sleep. 'Get out!' he whispered hoarsely. 'Get out, I tell 'e! Get out!'

They scuffled away, sobered, amazed at his tone. Bill, the last to go, slammed the door and stumbled up the three steps.

'Rude ol' man!' Bill said, loud enough for Grea'gran to hear. 'Never can tak' a joke. After we give him tha' party an' all!'

Grea'gran trembled with anger. Then he lay quite still, soothed by a thought that warmed his whole body, as though the sunshine of an August day had fallen on bleak winter.

God willing, he would not go yet. The doctor had said that he ought to live another ten years. . . . Jenny would be seventeen, then.

WHEN I WAS IN BASLE

VALENTINE ACKLAND

‘WHEN I was staying in Basle with Franz—’
‘Hoo-hoo-hoo!’ yelled the other women, and imitated her cautious deprecating accent, ‘When eye was in Barle with Frans—’ They laughed cheerfully, ‘Go on, Mariette, go on!’

Mariette flushed and hesitated, obviously struggling not to speak again, but in a moment she started timidly, ‘Well, I’m sure I must have told you before, but in Basle —’

‘With Frans—’ put in the chorus.

She nodded placatingly, ‘Yes. We were staying there together. He had got such a good job we could afford to take a summer holiday. Oh, it was wonderful, after Europe!’

‘Where d’you think Switzerland is, then?’ asked Jeanne indignantly.

‘I mean, after Alsace and Paris,’ said Mariette.

‘*Paris!* What an idiot you are! What’s Basle to Paris, I ask you!’ shouted Jeanne.

‘Well,’ said Mariette, who could not stop herself now, ‘Paris hadn’t been up to much, what with the war and everything. And in Basle the shops were full of things and everyone was so kind and polite. I never saw anyone cross there. Every night we went out to a cinema or something, or else sat in a café till midnight, watching the people go by. It was summer—’

‘What about the nights you didn’t go to a cinema or café?’ asked one of the women, giggling.

‘We went to bed early,’ replied Mariette with great simplicity, while the other women laughed.

‘But usually we went out,’ she continued. ‘Franz used to like watching the people. He could always pick out the latest refugees. “Look,” he would say, “Here’s another of ’em. How the devil they manage it I don’t know. It shows they’ve got plenty of cash salted down somewhere.” And of course it did. They were almost all Jews or else British or Americans.’

‘Lucky devils!’ said one woman.

'They came over in floods after a bit. But they were very mean about their cash. "There ought to be plenty to be picked up," Franz said. "But it's the devil to get hold of it!" It was wonderfully warm there. Lovely weather. Such a lot of sun and so much food—'

There was a long silence. Everyone allowed herself to be overwhelmed by memories. 'That's how things were,' they thought. 'Only a year ago—'

Jeanne sprang up suddenly, shrieking and clasping her hands to her head, 'I had Jean and Jeannine! I had a house! I had a house!' she shouted, stamping her feet with anguish and jerking herself from side to side, forcing the other women to attend, 'I had! I had! Everything beautiful, everything so clean, so new! Jean was always making me buy new things; nothing but the best for you, my girl, he would say. And now look at me! Look at me! "I'm getting tired of this or that—" I'd say. "Throw it out, then," he'd tell me. Oh God! I'm sick to death of the lot of you, with your cow-pat faces!' She spat on the floor violently. No one moved or spoke. After a moment she crept back to her bunk and climbed on to it, crouching there in silence, holding her head in her hands.

Mariette started again, 'Yes, Franz always said that too. Nothing is too good for you, he said. He had such a soft heart. He was a good man. He had travelled everywhere too. Basle was no novelty to him. He knew it as well as if he had been born there. But he enjoyed it as much as I did. We were so happy together,' she paused and looked shyly round at the other women. 'We were in love, you know; very much in love together. The two of us were quite silly—' She laughed gently. One or two of the women nodded, privately as it were, and without looking at each other.

' "Let them cut each other's throats," Franz would say,' continued Mariette, ' "So long as they leave us in peace they can do what they like." But of course the Germans had got to Paris and right along the frontiers, and Italy had come in. Then Franz started worrying about making a bit of money and he used to travel to the frontier. One day he never came back. I hadn't got enough to pay for our room so I went off to look for him. Well—then I landed up here.'

'And that was the end of your little summer holiday, was it?' Jeanne's voice was shaken with rage and hatred, but for a moment Mariette did not notice this.

'Oh, yes,' she replied ingenuously. 'It all ended then. And it is like a dream now, when I remember it —'

Jeanne laughed shrilly. 'How did you come to take up with a Boche, anyway?'

'Franz wasn't—'

'Oh no! Of course not! Not with that name!'

'But he came from Switzerland. You know that—'

'How do we know?' Jeanne suddenly had become spokesman for the whole group.

'I told you,' replied Mariette lamely.

There was a chorus of laughter and jeers. The other women, even those who hadn't previously paid any attention to the proceedings, began to crowd over to where Mariette stood. They jostled one another, breathing heavily, but no one touched her. They stared at her. They let their angry eyes crawl over her like flies. They nudged each other, and examined her without speaking.

Mariette faced them trembling; she was very red in the face.

The tension in the hut was terrible. The silence was strung taut as a wire. It vibrated and the air trembled.

Then from outside came the sound of heavy trampling, of army boots, and another sound, a ragged scuffle, a shuffling of innumerable feet; a sound of ineffable weariness and misery.

One of the women moaned. Another whispered, 'Oh, God. Never mind her. We are all lost.'

Slowly the whole group dispersed. One by one they crept back to their bunks; some climbed on to the bare boards and lay down; others sat, staring dully at the floor. After a while whispered conversations started again. A woman coughed and spat noisily.

Mariette stood without moving. She did not weep. For a very long time she stayed where they had left her, and then at last went over to her own bunk and stretched herself upon it.

For the rest of the day no one spoke a word to her.

REFLECTIONS ON THE POST-WAR BRITISH CINEMA

ROBERT HERRING

BEFORE discussing four recent British films, I should like to say that since my last article, and naturally in no way connected with it, the Gaumont cinema in the King's Road, Chelsea, showed in April *The Cage of Nightingales* and followed it, on three Sundays in May, with programmes of French films, of which the first was *Les Visiteurs du Soir*.

This is a step in the right direction (the more so as the Gaumont, unlike its neighbour, the Classic, along the road, is not a specialist but a commercial cinema); it means that a circuit is willing to take—or at least, to try—the risk of giving the general public a film in a foreign language at a general-release house not in the West End. At one time, the 'risk' would have lain in showing a British film. Times change, even if their march is not necessarily onwards. We can remember when all French films, like all German and all Russian before them, were hailed as 'good', and all British were 'bad'. It takes years to get an idea into the public's head and, once in, even longer to get it out, or rather, develop it so that it keeps abreast of reality. At present, the public is encouraged to think that a few successes among British films, aided by a crop of more than usually banal Hollywood vulgarities, have swept the British cinema to the top of the world. The truth, as our most popular male star has pointed out, is that many of Hollywood's best directors were not making entertainment-films during the war, and just as many bad British films are turned out as ever. He maintains that he should know, since he has appeared in many of them. What he doesn't say is that his opinion carries weight because he is not only a star but a good actor and a man of intelligence.

On the other side speaks one of those beings known as executives. He declares that what the British cinema needs is not a

few freak masterpieces (by which I take it is meant a *Henry V* or *Cæsar and Cleopatra*) but a sufficiency of moderately cheap, moderately good (i.e. not immoderately expensive or flagrantly bad) pictures which will net profits in the provinces and let prestige in the pre-release purlicue go hang. Certainly, when one bears in mind such items as *Gaiety George*, *London Town*, *The Madonna of the Seven Moons*, one will agree that pretension is no guarantee of pleasure . . . but then, everyone save movie-makers knows that, and as for what the British cinema needs, I can only say that I am not the British cinema, so I don't know. I am only someone who is grateful to find a film which does not waste my time.

Nevertheless, the four films I have chosen are not a quartet of unsymbolic swallows. I could, a few months back, have written on *The Seventh Veil*, *The Overlanders*, *Dead of Night*, *The Captive Heart*. I could have expended a complete essay on *Great Expectations*. I did not, because the satisfaction that picture gave was largely, if unfairly, offset by *Nicholas Nickleby*, and as we are in for a Dickens cycle, I shall wait (perhaps) for *Oliver Twist*. Meanwhile, I saw *Odd Man Out*, *Temptation Harbour*, *The Man Within*, and *Black Narcissus* primarily because I wanted to see them and, having seen them, was not so stupefied that I was unable to write.

That is the main test. The fact that they are British is not the point—it is a point—but these films were not chosen to illustrate an idea on British cinema as such. They, and others, are mentioned simply because together they make it possible to speak of a British post-war cinema. For whatever that is worth. As films, however, they are to be judged first as the telling of a story in pictures to which sound is aural counterpart; and the telling of a story is in turn the revealing and following of a state of mind.

2

Only one of these films seems to me to show anything approaching a cinematic conception. That is *Odd Man Out*. *Temptation Harbour* is taken from a Simenon story in itself so cinematic that, as so often happens, those who brought it to

the screen were misled by the very quality which attracted them and did not do enough work on it. *The Man Within* and *Black Narcissus* fail—there can be no question of that—because of a dire gap between script and story.

This is the besetting sin of amateurs in all arts, the gap between idea (story) and treatment (script). As the British film industry is, even as industry, in nothing more British than in its amateurishness, this gap is the riving flaw in most British pictures. Though this quartet has the ambition to be works of insight and imagination, and even to achieve at moments a degree of taste, they have all kicked over the traces of convention without first making sure that the Pegasus they aspire to be had wings strong enough to do without traces. They all attempt the same journey—the testing of a human being's soul. This in itself would set them apart from the general run did not the fact there are four of them suggest it may be a current trend. In none of them does the course of love, true or otherwise, run smooth, nor the 'happy ending' occur. In each of them, save perhaps for *The Man Within*, the only possible ending is permitted. All deal with chase. Another recent British film, *Hue and Cry*, was undisguised chase. We are not unduly cynical if we consider the possibility of the British film industry debating the fundamentals of formula.

The main body of the industry has learnt a lot from its once-despised branch, documentary, which flourished like a sedum or sempervivum, close to the ground which couldn't give more than occasional nourishment to orchidaceous productions. The introduction of personal interest into documentary is, witness *Man of Arran*, never so successful as the reinforcing of personal interest by documentary, witness *School for Secrets*. The British film owes much of its present popularity to the way in which its wartime films combined fictional story with documentary background, and for some reason or other, it has not really outrageously exploited this success. The conventional love-story ruins many an otherwise promising film, but then you have only to read the cheaper papers, listen to the wireless on the air or the witless in Parliament, and you realize that convention spoils much that is promising. The British like things being spoilt; it satisfies their conscience—one

of the reasons why we make such disaster of peace and are so cheerful in war. The British like convention. But they like everything in its place, and the place for that is—outside the door; a label neatly affixed, like 'No Hawkers'. What goes on inside the door, is nobody's business; an Englishman's home is his castle. That is why we have been such bad makers of films. We are not, at heart, *voyeurs*. There is only one Peeping Tom in our history and he's not a hero. When you add to this our lack of visual imagination, you have a reason why it is hard for anyone to come along and replace our front doors with, as it were, bead curtains. We prefer gossip from gazing. Verbiage wins over views—for verbiage allows us individualism and panders to our innate distrust of facts as such. You can't talk if people don't listen, and as story-tellers we are good listeners—the aristocracy of one artist to another. The listening is tinged with impatience, and when patience is saturated, up we gits. Unprepared, of course. O, woefully! Look at these films. Each one of them spoilt by a childish collapse at its crucial moment, or so it seemed to me. But at least doing something—since words came along—which our old silent films wouldn't have known how to try. I think films as an art died with talkies, but the British film had scarcely been born then, and in any event hasn't noticed it.

3

The importance of speech to us is shown very clearly in *The Man Within*. Here, the story is told as evidence given by a boy under torture. The form is action and related action plaited in strands. I don't think it is by any means successful, but that is due to other elements I will assess later. The makers of *Black Narcissus* didn't go to quite such lengths, but they used the flash-back, with dialogue, to explain present behaviour by past events. In this, both films were really less cinematic in the very way in which they seemed most so—making good use of camera and screen. They forget that these only exist to bring to fruition what has to be thought of first and last as a film—a series of 'frames' whose impingement on the mind, if any, of the spectator depends on the spiral of speed, chiming of light-

values, visual impact of scale and shot, quite as much as on the actual sights and sounds which they represent and should selectively serve.

The theme of *Odd Man Out* was nearly water-tight for a movie—the pursuit of a man who knew the game was up. It was a double pursuit, for it was in the man's mind that disaster lay. The tale was of an illegal organization robbing a bank to pay its members. From the start, the leader, who had just come out of prison, knew he was not fit for the raid; his heart was not in it. He has to try to escape, it is part of the game, but he knows there is no escape, and the film shows the whole machinery, both of pursuit and escape, set in action, whilst he, though continuing to act his part, knows there is none. The participation of James Mason, the hunted man, in the actual footage of the film is small in comparison to its effect. Mason is better than Muni; he never lets one feel the film is a skilful star build-up. The part of a hunted man, who remains passive throughout, is not necessarily 'sympathetic', but with little to do or say, he makes that little real and he is helped by a beautiful performance from Kathleen Ryan, who suggests love as if she had never seen it vitiated by magazine, movie, or make-up. The whole film, which buzzes with action round the central figure, has a sense of the vigour of life so that the rain is that which brings from the mud the flowers or at least the reflections, which rival the stars (you will know from that, the setting is Irish !) and the things which people care about and die for as a sign of faith in life are the real and intangible things. It is spoilt by misuse of the camera's vocabulary when the man falters on the bank-steps, and it is too long; towards the magnificent end, it is also too slow—British film-makers (like British stage-directors, witness *Othello* at the Piccadilly) must learn to differentiate between suspense and slackness of tempo; but it is a film which asks to accept as our main concern what happens in a man's mind when it is principle and permanences he cares about.

By comparison, *The Man Within* is a drab affair; no disparagement, for it sets out to be. It aims, perhaps, higher (or deeper) than *Odd Man Out*, and perhaps achieves more. Granted its premise, it is true enough. But, overtly psycho-

logical, it results in that uncomfortable feeling that it is the psychology of the makers we are watching, and that the characters on the screen are puppets representing something quite other than the story the makers mean them to tell.

We have the case of a boy who so hated his bullying father (accepted on hearsay) that he can't stand authority; so needs to love that he can't; and is so afraid of physical pain that he has to inflict it. So far so good, except that it is elementary, my dear what-not. The boy has as guardian a smuggler who rescues him from the school where he was bullied, by masters and boys alike, but takes few steps, at first, to defend him in his new environment or to develop him and, after all, psychology is no new science; it is merely the formulation of its terms which is recent. The smuggler's crew dislike the boy, in which I was with them: I also disliked the crew, who seemed to me the originals of a pirate play by Barrie. The boy worships his guardian, and this part of the film is quite beautifully done. No mawkishness, but an unsentimental graciousness. The boy, however, can be neither stroked nor licked into shape.

Wrongfully accused of stealing, he is whipped by the guardian, who does it because the boy has to be taught, but equally has to be saved from the fury of the crew. Ignoring this explanation, he betrays them, guardian and all, to the Excise. The rest of the film deals with his pursuit by his revengeful guardian, his own failure to make a go of any kindness that comes his way, and his final acceptance of courage as a lesser evil than anything else.

At no point does this boy give evidence of being more than fleetingly inhabited by any but the less interesting of man's lower instincts. His treatment of the women he meets is as low as betrayal of benefactor. In spirit he is a warped 'corner-boy'. It is a pity that the film does not explain this as well as state it; sheer reiteration of statement becomes monotonous and neither boy nor guardian, excellently as Richard Attenborough and Michael Redgrave portray them, have enough background to make them rounded characters. The film's weaknesses are an uncertainty of touch at moments when, one afterwards discovers, the boy is supposed to be behaving well, and a concentration on physical fear and suffering which

results in the final impression being of an exhibition of sadism rather than a battle of conscience.

Conscience also comes into *Temptation Harbour*, which is the kind of film the Germans used to make so well in the silent days, the Swedes before them, and the French and Russians since. It is, in fact, that rather boring little number through which the cinema of each country has to go as part of its growing pains, and it cannot be said that the British pains add very much to our knowledge or entertainment by growing so late in the day.

A signalman finds himself in possession of a suitcase full of stolen banknotes. It brings him no happiness, for he is haunted by his own conscience in keeping them and also, be it whispered, by his lack of imagination in how to use them. Robert Newton gives an interesting performance as a working man suddenly rich beyond dreams, but limited by those dreams. He is immensely helped by a young actress who plays his daughter; her name is Margaret Barton, and she is one to be watched. On the other hand, he and the film are immensely let down by the fact that the role of a side-show houri is allotted to Simone Simon, which is type-casting at its dullest, and the transference of the scene from Dieppe to Newhaven results in our being given a Newhaven so unlike the reality that only a British film-director could believe it. The money spends a certain amount of time in the sea, but is surprisingly dry when it comes out, and the shot showing the signalman handling it is bad enough to become one more classic example of British amateurishness. Which is a pity, as Robert Newton really has been a very good boy in this film, and the whole thing does attempt to be imaginative. But the plain fact is that the makers have not mastered the simple facts of telling a story in film, and so it drags, wanders, misses fire, and peters out like a modern ministerial statement—vague, irrelevant, and of uninspired vocabulary.

The makers of *Black Narcissus* never have known how to tell a story in film, and they get no nearer it in this picture by attempting to tell three, and discarding each in turn. The main one is that of a number of British nuns who start out to run a dispensary and school in a Himalayan fastness formerly used

by the local prince as his harem. The secondary story concerns a hairy Englishman who, with a physique belying any acquaintance with mountains, had a habit of appearing nearly naked; thus causing a nun, ear-marked for trouble from the start, to run mad, order a red dress from Calcutta and—since both colour and texture were unbecoming to a white woman at that height—to be spurned. The third story brought in Sabu, who wanted to be taught English. As Sabu's form of Indian dialect is that more-than-Oxford English which only his kind can or would speak, the request seemed to savour of irony and I gathered he was really in the film mainly to run off with an Indian girl left with the nuns by the aforesaid Englishman; whether this meant that race is thicker than Technicolor, I do not know. But Sabu, the Englishman, and the weather all proved too much for the nuns, so they packed up and left. I do not believe that Rumer Godden, from whose book the film is taken, would be capable of writing such inconclusive nonsense, and I cannot understand why the filmmakers dropped each aspect of it as soon as it showed signs of being capable of development. Moreover, I think it is dangerous to deal with such age-old and unalterable facts as the Himalayas and a vocation if you are going to assume that your audience is so nit-wit that you can play old Harry with what are your facts. I like mountains, and I have worked among nuns, but *Black Narcissus* gave me little feeling of either.

The critics have been very kind about the colour photography of the Himalayas, but when all is said and done, it is only what Frank Smythe has been doing for years; it was his Kodachrome records of the Everest attempts that first showed us what colour could be made to give in the hands of a sensitive craftsman. *Black Narcissus* makes a great deal of the wind, which is supposed to have a great effect on the characters. It is a very arbitrary wind, varying much from long-shot to close-up, and seeming to owe little to either direction or prevalence. Sunset, too, happens oddly.

As to the nuns, criticism is disarmed by the statement that whatever Order they belong to is one of annually renewed vows; this of course permits a certain worldliness not being thrown off—resulting, for instance, in the Sister Superior

being apparently unable to see a man or to pray without her mind wandering, in flash-back, to the days when her lover gave her emeralds and then, aha—yes, you've got it—left her pregnant by an Eirean stream. So that she hid her shame in the Sisterhood. This, though scarcely interesting, is understandable. What I did not understand was why the Sister Superior was the bell-ringer (surely this chore falls to Sister Porteresses, or was that only in my hospital?) or why the novice tried to push her over the cliff. Was it to prove she was a novice? Anyone else knows that a Sister Superior is, and has to be, a tough woman, with whom it is rash to come to grips.

I did not understand why so much was made about height—8,000 feet—nor could I be persuaded that the Mother Superior lower down would have sent the girls up without sedatives or have exposed them to the interruptions of David Farrar and Sabu as a mere game. Nuns, at least as I know them, are practical, efficient, and regard knowing about the world as part of their duty in renouncing it. No batch of women as woolly as those in *Black Narcissus* would be tolerated in any community of working sisters. I am sorry to say this, because the makers did try to get away from preconceived formulæ in their portrayal of nuns; they gave us that sense of bubbling gaiety, that exaggeration of trifles—but, alas, they gave us too the cast-down eyelid, and they failed to give us any sense of vocation.

There is a moment when the young Sister Superior comes face to face with the local Holy Man, and we hope here there is going to be a statement of conflict. But that, too, is shirked. Indeed, the only conflict is that familiar one in the minds of Messrs. Powell and Pressburger, who have given us such examples of split personality as *A Matter of Life and Death* and *The Canterbury Tale*. The real interest of *Black Narcissus* lies in Deborah Kerr; she plays the young Sister Superior with a tolerable modesty, which though inoffensive, does not come within hailing distance of inspiration. But she is a personable young woman, and the role demands that she wears no lipstick. The gain in charm is enormous. She has a following in this country, and *Black Narcissus* may be held to have been worth making if only it leads girlhood to avoid taking that

veil of make-up which at present means that from the age of twelve, they condemn their cheeks, mouth, and finger-nails never to be seen.

To see each of these films as soon as I could, I paid six shillings; I could have paid double. Not one of them was worth it, because not one was expert. But when all criticizing is made, I would say that—however inexpertly—all of them attempted to deal with states of mind. They were like a blind man fumbling for a lock that isn't there, on a door that only needs a good push to swing open. Still, they all said something. *Odd Man Out* dared to ask audiences to listen to dialogue about death, religion, and law; *The Man Within*, about courage; *Temptation Harbour*, about honesty (and though this was the worst made of the lot, no one walked out on it or laughed, as they did in reaction from *The Man Within*). In *Black Narcissus*, they dare to talk about Christ. And in all, films, naturally.

I don't think we shall ever make easily flowing films which have the happy feeling of being what a great many people swung their life-blood into making; our temper does not lie that way; our good films, when they are good, are triumphs over our temperament rather than expressions of it. As I said, at the beginning of this article, we are too Puritan to enjoy *looking*. For one peeping Tom, there are a hundred delving Dicks and Harrys—Dicks and Harrys delving into their Meccano sets, their seedlings, their fuses. That is what we can do—documentary; the making of a hen-house rather than the keeping of a human relationship. We believe in the latter, perhaps more than any other race, possibly for that reason have no need to film it. The fact remains we regard vision as a form of disclosure, not of expression. It is typical that in *The Man Within*, where both the women are meant to be seductive, they are photographed with what seems a deliberate malice. Only in *Black Narcissus*, where the star is safely put away—a nun, no use looking at her—is she allowed to look ravishing. Without lipstick.

WORDS INTO TYPE

ALEC DAVIS

TO the casual reader it may seem that an author's words transform themselves effortlessly, almost miraculously, from his manuscript into a printed book. The more discriminating bookman realizes that there is always a good deal of hard work, and sometimes inspiration, in book production. Authorship is the creative art, but to present an author's words in their most appropriate printed form is an interpretative art, by no means unimportant. The book designer's task demands technical skill, æsthetic judgment, and sensibility to literary style as well as subject-matter.

For most of the past decade the book designer in Britain has been working under unprecedented difficulties. Normally, two of the matters that provide widest scope for his initiative and his discretion are the choice of paper and of the size of the book. Nowadays he generally has to use what kind of paper he can get, and even that is in such short supply that choice of size scarcely amounts to more than finding the smallest space in which a given manuscript can decently be rendered—and deciding on that; with an eye on the technical requirements of the printing presses and folding machines to be used.

While covers and title-pages provide the typographer with the widest scope for a personal style, in the ordinary text pages of a book his first consideration must be legibility. This quality is partly physical and partly psychological; it is something more than mere visibility, which an optician's sight-testing cards, for example, possess in high degree. Their types would be neither pleasant nor easy to read in a book, which consists not of individual A's and B's but of letters that form words, words that form lines, lines that form pages.

To realize how numerous are the typographer's problems we need only consider the unit of book design, the 'spread' of two pages. It is made up of printed and unprinted parts, or in more technical words, type area and margins; and he must

decide on the right proportion between them. (If he is working for a publisher bound by the War Economy Agreement, he will find the maximum percentage that may be devoted to margins is laid down for him.) He must also decide on the widths of the different margins in relation to one another. If the type were printed in the true centre of the page, it would appear to be nearer to the bottom, and to avoid this unpleasant effect it is usual for the bottom margin to be wider than the top: Art helps more than Science towards gaining the desired visual effect. For a similar reason, the outer margins are generally wider than the inner, to give the two facing pages their rightful unity and avoid the impression that the type is slipping out of the book sideways.

In deciding on the type-area, the book designer has automatically decided also on the length of his lines. This in turn must influence the choice of size of type. It is commonly believed that a large type is necessarily the easiest to read, but this is only partly true; if a large type is used in very short lines, either many words will have to be broken at the ends of lines or spacing will cause white 'rivers' of unprinted paper, which run diagonally across the horizontal lines of type and distract the eye instead of helping it to follow them.

Legibility suffers also if too small a type is used—and not only can type be too small absolutely, as is generally realized; it can also be too small in relation to the length of line. Normally, it should be of such a size that not less than one nor more than three complete alphabets of the same type would make up the length of a line. (This page is printed in a type of which slightly more than two alphabets would fit into the page width: here is one:—

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

—to prove the point.) If it is necessary to use small type on a wide page, then it is best to divide the width into two columns; a course that is rarely adopted in works of fiction but more frequently in Bibles, technical books, and, of course, magazines.

Closely involved with the length of lines is also the amount of space to allow between lines. It is obvious that the letters in one line must not touch those in the next line, and in practice they cannot do so, because they are cast on pieces of metal slightly

larger than themselves; but the space can be further increased—as it is in this page—by inserting strips of metal (leads) between the type-lines. Leading, intelligently done, increases legibility by preventing lines from appearing to run together and by making it easier for the eye to swing over from the end of one line to the beginning of the next.

If we consider lines of the *same* length, those which are set in a bolder and blacker type will generally require more space between lines than lighter types. . . . And this brings us, belatedly but inevitably, to the choice of type-face. One need not be a typographer to realize that types are many and various. Some are not suitable for continuous reading but only for short phrases in advertisements or on title-pages; even without these there is a bewildering variety of 'book' faces—all the finest types from fifteenth-century designs (recut for the now universal composing-machine) to the masterpieces of our own age. Some are broad and have a bookish look, like the *Baskerville* in which *Life and Letters* is printed—designed by a wealthy atheist in eighteenth-century Birmingham and first used in his edition of Virgil. Others are more economical of space, with characters that are narrower individually and 'set' closer together, like Stanley Morison's *Times Roman* now widely used not only in *The Times* but in books. Yet others omit the serifs (the tiny cross-strokes at the end of main strokes, such as the horizontals in this 'I'), and so take on an essentially modern, even mechanistic, appearance. These are only a few type-faces among hundreds, and as most of the hundreds have medium and bold weights, and italic as well as roman characters, they give the book designer plenty of scope for individuality in his choice.

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

IBSEN. BRIAN W. DOWNS. Cambridge University Press.
10s. 6d.

IBSEN THE NORWEGIAN. M. C. BRADBROOK. Chatto and
Windus. 10s. 6d.

HENRIK Ibsen should present no difficulty to the modern writer, for so logical is his development as a thinker, social commentator, and public reformer that his work shines with a crystal clarity. This special quality of radiance sprang from his poetic nature, which, if it is neglected, results in that type of penny-line phrase as exemplified in the old *Saturday Review*, after a performance of *Ghosts*: 'A teacher of æstheticism from the Lock Hospital.' However, to this kind of cheap censure, his earlier biographers, Gerhard Gran and Halvdan Koht, provided an admirable corrective—in fact so admirable a one that between them they eliminated the need for any further full-length account of his life. Fortunately, Mr. Downs and Miss Bradbrook have realized this and accordingly content themselves with particular aspects of the poet's dramas: the former with a survey of the intellectual background and the latter with an evaluation of the Norwegian character and its effects upon the master builder. In each case the books are written with precision and scholarship, and in the small number of places where they overlap there is a sympathetic uniformity of outlook.

Describing the mid-nineteenth century failure of Scandinavianism, Mr. Downs likens what Ibsen believed *ought* to be the duty of Norwegians to the Danes to what many Englishmen consider in times of crisis *is* the duty of the Irish people to Britain. The point is succinctly made. Miss Bradbrook puts it another way: she asks the reader to substitute Norway for England, Denmark for Czechoslovakia, and the year 1864 for 1938. In either example, it makes the writing take on a new immediacy, for it is this very contemporary awareness which is one of the birth-marks of the true dramatic critic. As Ibsen said in 1874: 'All that I have written this last ten years I have mentally lived through. But no poet lives through anything

isolated . . . all his countrymen live through [it] together with him.' Later, apropos of Dr. Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*, he declared that where he had stood at the completion of each play, a considerable crowd now stood; but that he was no longer there, but further ahead. It was the visionary in him, as in all artists, that gave him those strangely haunting, prophetic powers which can only be comprehended fully in the theatre, for it is there that the slammed door in *The Doll's House* makes its complete impact. Moreover, it is an impact which is totally different from being told by Miss Bradbrook that even in Nora's game of 'hide and seek' with the children there is a certain symbolism. They are reactions set at different levels in which care must be taken not to let the auditorium be superseded by the study—valuable as the latter is.

For instance, few critics have ejaculated on seeing Hedda Gabler living in a 'sitting room suitable to lodgings in a side street, whereas an illustration of the first production shows it to be adorned with palms and rich hangings'. In such passages, Mr. Downs is particularly good. Or when James Agate, reviewing *Little Eyolf* in 1930, wrote that the actor playing Borgheim 'wearing one of yesterday's Norfolk suits gave the impression that he would have preferred repairing one of to-day's roads to repairing this shocking part' Miss Bradbrook's erudition is again helpful. She explains that the line—'What a joy to be a road mender!'—was of great significance when the play was originally produced, since in Norway roads meant shorter distances between fjords, and were therefore regarded as signs of progress. It is comments like these that make both monographs apt handbooks for potential producers, as well as from a purely academic point of view. There was a place, too, for an examination of Ibsen's debt to other writers, and Mr. Downs has executed his task with skill: he provides a particularly stimulating chapter on Kierkegaard's influence on *Brand* and the effect of the Danish dramatists on his early plays.

It is, then, within their authors' restricted limits that these two books succeed. They take one as it were to the poet's inner sanctum, reveal the secrets of his reading and the rivalries of his career, but never introduce the man personally:

for that one must go back in mind to the select Sunday evening performances at the Vaudeville of an earlier age, or turn up the leaves of an old theatre scrapbook. In such instances of recaptured memory, there is Shaw to provide once more the quintessence of Ibsenism, Agate reminiscences of Duse as the lady from the sea, and Archer, who for a tap on the shoulder, will let one shake the old Norwegian by the hand.

NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE

LADY GREGORY'S JOURNALS, 1916-1930. Edited by LENNOX ROBINSON. Putnam. 18s.

MUNGO'S MANSION. WALTER MACKEN. Macmillan. 5s.

APART from the obvious difference of form, what content do the journals of a celebrity offer that cannot be bettered by a biography or autobiography? I would hazard the suggestion that there exist three main differences. First, the journals show personal relationships with contemporaries, with spontaneous comment on them and on current happenings. Next, the journals can convey unconsciously (or almost unconsciously) the nature of the writer's own character. And finally, the difference that perhaps seems most fundamental: the journals are less consciously influenced by thoughts of publication and are more immediately influenced by the impact on the writer of the person or event concerned. This last means that journals tend to be sometimes irritating in their fleeting allusiveness, less balanced in their selection and evaluation of subject matter, less impersonal in presentation, less mature in judgment, and less an interwoven, patterned whole than are biographies or autobiographies written in retrospective tranquillity.

These virtues, and the defects of these virtues, are evident in *Lady Gregory's Journals*. For example, her intimacy with Yeats was so great that his presence is nearly always there, yet comparatively rarely does he himself appear as a specific figure. Lennox Robinson, who edits the Journals, remarks in his introduction to the section on Yeats (only some eight pages out of the book's 340): 'They were so close-knit in fellowship and work that it was hardly necessary for her to record accurately his speech and thought.'

The character of Lady Gregory discloses itself rather charmingly: her love for her house of Coole and her determination to keep it unharmed through the Troubles for her grandchildren; her sturdy political independence showing how, although a natural revolutionary and 'agin the government', she remained free of rancour and intolerance and full of pity; her love for the Irish people; her practical nature and lack of theorizing; her dogged spending of herself when old to get for Ireland the Lane Pictures; her long years of enthusiasm for the Abbey Theatre. The last sentence of the whole book reads: 'I sometimes think my life has been a series of enthusiasms.'

The last sentence of the whole book, but probably not of her Journals. For Lennox Robinson in editing them has preserved but one quarter of what Lady Gregory herself typed out in later years from the originals, and he has arranged this selection under six rough subject headings, keeping the chronology only within those subdivisions. One result is that sometimes a passing subject is amplified or referred to in another section. Such divisions are not, and cannot be, mutually exclusive. A more satisfactory presentation of the Journals would perhaps have been to keep them in year order, adding a really full index of persons and places.

Each section has an introduction by Lennox Robinson, who has had the integrity to retain a number of 'hits, cuts, and thrusts' at himself. The heading which most English readers will turn to first is probably the Abbey Theatre. Here there is much of interest, but the time limits are unfortunate. There is practically no fresh word on the early growth of the Theatre or the *Playboy* row. The chief excitements, standing like rocks above the fleeting froth of daily business—is some actor worth a rise or should an attendant have a fire for warmth?—are provided by the rise of O'Casey; for the Journals speak of his beginnings with the *Shadow of a Gunman*, enjoy his triumph with *Juno and the Paycock*, report on the women's riot over the *Plough and the Stars*, and express 'pain for the loud quarrel' over the rejection of the *Silver Tassie*.

Other sections contain a vivid account of the Terror and the Civil War, some entertaining glimpses of G. B. S., several good anecdotes, and the complicated negotiations undertaken by

Lady Gregory in her long and last enthusiasm to get the Lane Pictures returned to Ireland.

In the Abbey tradition of the *Playboy* and the earlier O'Casey, and from that strangely Mediterranean seaport of Galway, near which is Coole, comes *Mungo's Mansion*, the first play written in English by Walter Macken of the Galway Gaelic Theatre. It has about it the fresh winds of the seaport, although the scene is set in a tenement room, and it is racy with the Irish simplicity of Synge and joyous with the Irish savouring of words. Lady Gregory was proud that she had encouraged O'Casey, saying 'Your strong point is characterization': that also is Macken's strong point, and without it his story might wear a little thin.

For the plot of *Mungo's Mansion* is slight—a Galway docker is confined by an accident to his room and has to make his racing bets by proxy. The unexpected result is that he wins a large sum of money, which he finally decides to use to move to a new council house in a suburb. To rise thus in the world has long been his family's desire, but Mungo has been content to remain in his slum. What changes his mind is not only that his child falls ill of diphtheria, but also a tense quarter of an hour he spends, while crippled, at the mercy of the tenant of the room upstairs, who is being hunted by the Guard for having murdered his wife. This highly dramatic scene forms a strong contrast to the open hilarity of the rest of this bustling comedy.

ALWYN ANDREW

DEATH OF THE CATHEDRAL. FRED MARNAU. The Grey Walls Press. 8s. 6d.

FRED MARNAU's second volume of poems, *Death of the Cathedral*, fully justifies the recognition which he received some years ago for *The Wounds of the Apostles*. Again we are in the grip of his merciless intensity. His spirit struggles with chaos and decay, and surges heavenwards. 'Im Erdreich halb versunken und das Haupt voll Licht' ('Half in the earth submerged, my head in light'). These poems should be read by all who have poetry at heart, who believe, with Novalis, that 'the poetic sense has a near affinity with the prophetic sense'. Marnau wrestles in dark despair—striving to be blessed. He

does not easily indulge in beautifully flowing phrases. His praise rises out of torment and wild lament, is born out of barren terror and the fearful wounds of war and torture chambers. 'Gehenkt, gespalten und erstickt ist jeder, den ich kenne, und von verdrehtem Wort verdreht der Mund' ('Hanged and split and strangled is everyone I know and twisted are their mouths by twisted words'), but the poem ends with 'habe ich, Undine, das Herz noch einmal hochgebracht, in die Nacht gehört und Dank gesungen für meine guten Jahre, Wachtfeuer im Lenz'. ('I have, Undine, brought my heart to the height once more, listened into the night and sung in thanks for these my good years; watchfire in spring.')

Belief and faith assert themselves with difficulty; many of his poems show—honest and serious—irresolute fluctuation between hope and hopelessness. A very beautiful exception is the Ode VI (to Mary) 'So kommt doch dieser Trost von dir für alle Zeit, dass Gott uns anders denkt, als wir es wissen, und dass vielleicht auch ich durchleuchtet bin und strahle, indes ich arg vom Tod durchschauert und verworfen und verwirrt' ('still comes from you this comfort for all time, that God regards us other than we know; and that perhaps I too am flooded with light and shine, the while I am chilled by death and condemned and confused'). Also the last poem in the collection begins and ends on the affirmative, on a note of faith in the true, eternal significance. 'Die Schiffe kommen durch, was auch die Fahrt.' 'Was alles du warst, nicht erblickbar, kommt hier an' ('The ships come through whatever the voyage'; and 'whatever you were, not visible, here will arrive'). (The Ships.) And following, 'Das Wort verbrannte mit dem Holz, den Tränen und der Missetat.' ('The word was burnt with the wood, the tears and the misdeed') (*Death of the Cathedral*), we find 'da . . . spriesst das Wort und kreist wie junger Falke um die Sonnenuhr' ('There grows the word and it circles like a young falcon around the sun-dial') (*Unbroken Field*).

Stress must be laid on the European tradition, of which his work is part, and the very individual flavour of his unique personality. There is nothing contradictory in this. 'Often the best and even the most individualistic parts of the work of a

poet may be those in which the dead poets his ancestors assert their immortality most vigorously' (T. S. Eliot). The reviewer feels this to be true, and not merely a clever paradox, as tradition in Eliot's sense is a matter of very wide significance, and not merely assimilation or imitation. According to him it demands a historical sense which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal, actually widening and deepening the purely individual value into something of general value. He, the poet, must acquire consciousness of the past, which creates in him an unconscious concentration of experience. Marnau is in the direct line with Hölderlin, Nietzsche, Rilke, and George, and one sometimes in his poems discerns a faint echo of the expressionists and surrealists. He feels the pastness of the past, and also its presence. He reaches a peculiar climax, as yet hardly comprehensible to the ordinary individual. Common reality may be lost by intensifying it beyond a certain measure. To express the dazed feeling and the ecstatic suffering of a world exploding into shrieks and fragments may demand the breaking up of organic speech, may demand the scattering of sentences, may cause the poet to stammer words with deep and buried associations, words and phrases in which vision and knowledge are welded, which gain thereby a magic inward power and sometimes a barbaric outward appearance.

It is here that the translation falls short, is bound to fall short. Ernst Sigler often clarifies the meaning of the original, but thereby loses in magic and suggestiveness. Moreover, German lends itself much more easily to agglomerations of words, and a mere prefix such as 'ver' may add the meaning of 'having faded away' to a word 'ver-rauscht, ver-rollt, ver-donnert'). The translator unfortunately forgoes either the rhythm or the meaning. Perhaps poetry so saturated with significance and so concentrated in form is hardly transferable into another language. The triumphant sound of a line, 'und grüner Mittag hat mein Herz umrandet' for instance, is not satisfactorily rendered by 'and a green noonday is my heart's great wall'. Yet these are flaws in a translation of sometimes high quality and understanding.

ANNEMARIE HORST

THE ENEMIES OF LOVE. MAURICE LINDSAY. William Maclellan. 6s.

MORE strongly than ever before the Scottish poets indicate that there is a Scottish people behind the façade of the fair and fascinating Caledonia that only the English know. That there is Glasgow as well as the *Punch*-familiarized Gaelic ghillies of the rich man's deer forests; that there is the smoke, clang, and belch of industry besides the grouse-shoot; poverty and hard-living alongside Championship Golf.

Maurice Lindsay knows all this, and at his satiric best lashes with a furious zeal:

'O a health to the highborn, heartburn Highlands, where girls, like retrievers, mate
for easy money, neighbours' fields, or preserving the brainless pride of the blood,
and the sneerful world is weighed and found wanting in the scales of a shrinking estate,
and the poorer people are counted in stuffy kindness, and solid food;
and again, of the *faded General with the antler knees*:

'Autumn lauds him with blood and feathers,
puffy tweeds on the crunching fields;
memories pop, like roasted chestnuts,
flavour the just command he wields.'

In his other poems, and in the love lyrics in particular, Mr. Lindsay's work bears an astonishing resemblance to that of his equally promising contemporary Ruthven Todd. Both poets write honestly and tenderly in simple and poignant words. Compare them in the following:

'My Darling, in our personal love we carry
a strength the future nurtures towards that faith
which can redeem, and finally must parry
the last bewildered, broken thrust of Death.'

Maurice Lindsay

'Glad of my lonely walk beside the shrunken river,
Thinking of you while seeing the tufts of ash,
The chestnut candles and unreal magnolia's wax flower;
Glad that, in loving you, the whole world lives afresh.'

Ruthven Todd

'To Asswage Raging Pains'



¶ "Take Aloes, Hermodactils and Scammony, of each half a dram; reduce them to subtil powder and make Pills thereof with Juice of Roses" runs an old seventeenth-century prescription "to asswage the raging pains of gout and sciatica".

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My personal choice is a little in favour of Todd's more pagan outlook, but Lindsay—particularly in his remarkable *Nativity Poem at Christmas*—writes with an astringent quality which makes his Christianity powerful and convincing. Not for him the snivelling sentimentality of many of the Church's versifiers.

There is hardly a poem in *The Enemies of Love* which is not studded with quotable lines which betray his sensibility and his poet's eye:

'And walking in the white, half-frightened streets,
I remember you, leaning against a wind from the Tay;
the smile your eyes launched into loveliness
that drowned the careful words I meant to say.'

'My Darling, since the words I never uttered
were more than guns' mad gestures, more than death's
advances over towns that men had shattered,
I send you love, and with it all my faith.'

But even in those two quotations I am haunted by echoes of Ruthven Todd. I think they are both good poets in the making, travelling the obvious paths most poets take. Mr. Lindsay's chief blemish is a tendency to rely too much upon his adjectives for the structure of his verse:

'The forests of confusion
alight with bitter fires
wither the gay illusion
the anxious heart desires
to fill its brittle frame.'

But Mr. Lindsay is a young man yet, who—amongst other things—has edited an admirable anthology of Scottish verse, and to sum up this, his second book of poems, it is perhaps only necessary to insist that he writes very well.

DENIS BOTTERILL

POWERFUL LONG LADDER. OWEN DODSON. Farrar, Strauss. 2 dollars 50 cents.

A NEGRO'S FAITH IN AMERICA. SPENCER LOGAN. Macmillan. 7s. 6d.

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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

intellectual training has made poetry the pre-eminent art of the race, and the long dynasty of considerable poets shows no signs of extinction. Owen Dodson,¹ successor to James Weldon Johnson and to Countee Cullen, does not so much avow as interpret his racialism. Following the teaching of Johnson he tries to do for the negro what Synge did for the Irish, and endeavours 'to find a form that will express the racial spirit by symbols from within rather than by symbols from without—such as the mere mutilation of English spelling and pronunciation'. He plays skilfully upon the rich tones of the negro voice without ever falling into the sentimental futility of coon songs (written for the most part by white men). Race ambition pleads through his verse, but it is the poetry that sings.

From the evidence of this latest collection, *Powerful Long Ladder*, it would seem that as a poet Dodson has not yet achieved the technical mastery of his predecessors—though his memorial poem to Countee Cullen is like a kind parody of that brilliant poet—but he is, perhaps, a more painstaking student of his own race. He appreciates the paradoxes of bitterness and cheerfulness and turns both to poetic ends:—

' "V stands for Victory"
 "Now just what is this here Victory?"
 "It's what we get when we fight for it."
 "Ought to be Freedom, God do know that!" '

and he follows the negro into his new scepticism that still clings pathetically to the vocabulary of his old faith, and finding hopelessness still chants the optimism that is essential to negro survival:—

'We have fled back to autumn,
 We have shed winter for autumn
 This mystic hope in prophets has turned
 To a firmer hope in our hearts.'

There is less artifice in Spencer Logan's *A Negro's Faith in America*, for his credo is simple and needs no intellectual or artistic analysis. But the opening sentence of his book: 'I am a

¹His poem, "Winter Chorus," appeared in "Life and Letters" No. 37.

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Negro American—all my life I have wanted to be an American' epitomizes the surprising success of the idea of Americanism and its extraordinary hold even over its victims. In England; where the negro is a stranger, he is treated with more justice than in America, his only home. In Russia he is granted the equality that can only come from ignoring his colour. Yet he remains an American and covets Americanism.

Logan's book is a negro's analysis of the limitations of American democracy, and a criticism of the outstanding failure of negro and white Americans. He adds strength to his survey of the handicaps and advantages which the negro faces in America to-day because he can criticize coloured leaders as well as white opponents, but the striving after Americanism implicit to his thesis is also the weakness of his book.

The democracy that he covets is an unsophisticated American brand—equal opportunity to all to open ice-cream parlours. His certainty that America alone owns the patent of democracy is irritating and sophomoric—but very American.

Though she works through the novel-form Ann Petry's race consciousness has none of Dodson's artistic control or Logan's moderation.

Harlem that 'has attracted the peasant, the student, the business man, the professional man, artist, adventurer, worker, preacher, and exploiter' does not achieve any reality in *The Street*, for she allows only the extremes of brutality and of idealization. The character whom she obviously intended to be the weakest in the book, Pop, the heroine's father, is, as a character, the most realistic for he is the only one who has some of the contradictions of humanity: not all good nor all bad; desperate yet cheerful; indolent but kind. For the rest her people are rejects from the ready-made clothes store.

Judged as a first novel *The Street* is rather better than most. The problem of race gives a theme more important than the usual adolescent querulousness. Lutie, the heroine, is an imitation Faulkner heroine in a black skin, but her futile attempt to avoid the atmosphere of fear, violence, and evil in 'the street' is a parable of something greater: the endeavour of the negro to make beauty, loyalty, and honesty out of the materials of vicious oppression.

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Yet sociological earnestness cannot excuse confused story telling, and Mrs. Petry's novel, with its tortuousness and painful humourlessness is as unreal and as untypical of the negro as was the old Mammy-song in its excessive simplicity and good humour.

J. E. MORPURGO

THE SIXTH HEAVEN. L. P. HARTLEY. PUTNAM. 8s. 6d.

The Shrimp and the Anemone was a delicate and subtle evocation of the childhood of Eustace Cherrington; in it one detected lyricism: and the whole narrative was suffused with an infinite regret for the past. In *The Sixth Heaven*, the second volume in the trilogy, Eustace is at Oxford, aged twenty-three; and once more Mr. Hartley distils the essence of a stage of physical and spiritual growth that has gone—walks up the High, the making of friends, conflicting loyalties, endless soul-searching conversations in the evenings over glasses of sherry, light-hearted indulgences in drink and art, women and religion. One is left with the impression of looking back into the past and living again, only this time more intensely, in the imagination, a life that is no longer actual.

When the story opens Eustace is a diffident young man dependent on the good opinion of others; he has inherited a certain sum of money which gives him a reputation for wealth, and his problem is how to spend it, how 'to do the right thing', and at the same time manage his own life so that he can get the maximum out of himself. He leads a very social life, being popular and unable to discourage people. He wants to study and get his First, but at the same time he does not wish to antagonize friends by refusing to drink with them; he wants to experience life to the full but he is so afraid that showing emotion is 'bad form' that he does nothing; he would like to have a good time if only his friends and family would approve.

Thus Eustace devotes himself to other people: to his sister Barbara and her wedding (which he pays for): to his other sister Hilda who is absorbed in a clinic for deformed children (which he partly pays for), and to expensive parties which he gives so as not to appear mean. The result is that though other



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people benefit by Eustace's generosity, he himself is left high and dry and emotionally restricted.

Mr. Hartley evokes the atmospheric impact of Oxford extremely well, but, like Eustace, he finds it hard to describe emotional states of mind, except in the more tender forms: affection between friends, brotherly love, and the reactions to music and mysticism which form the climax of the book when Eustace goes to Lady Staveley's house-party and his favourite sister Hilda goes off into the dusk in an aeroplane. This is Eustace's *sixth heaven*—forms outside reality, dimly apprehended, which are centred round the plane in the sky, the music which is played while they wait for Hilda to return. All this is well done and beautifully written, and 'as light as a May butterfly'.

ROBIN KING

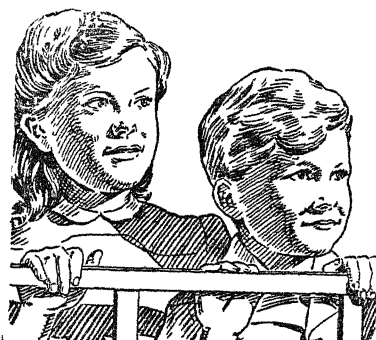
THE LOST TREASURES OF LONDON. WILLIAM KENT.

Illustrated. Phoenix House. 12s. 6d.

MAN's urge to build and his apparent compulsion to destroy combine sadly to form the material of this book which is, as its title makes clear, a record of London's architectural losses in five years of raids. It is compiled by William Kent, author of many books on London and editor of *An Encyclopædia of London*. He disclaims any attempt at completeness. Though it is hard to think of any omissions, he says: 'I have not catalogued all [buildings hit], I have chosen those of general interest,' adding, 'of those of which I may make no mention it may be assumed that they have not been damaged or that the damage sustained was trifling.'

The material has been arranged in the form of seven Walks, each estimated to take not more than two hours. In addition there are brief chapters on the fate of Greater London, Outdoor Statues, and 'The Evacuated Treasures'. Two pages are taken up with courteous thanks to a vast body of informants. There are twenty-four pages of plates, excellent photographic endpapers, and seven street plans showing London's post-war topography. The book may be confidently recommended to all lovers of London, both as a record of the blitz and as a necessary supplement to all other books on the city. It is not

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a work of imagination, but its sober presentation of facts and figures makes it one on which the imagination can work; for that, we are grateful.

A. WILLS

MUSIC AND SOCIETY. WILFRID MELLERS. Dennis Dobson. 8s. 6d.

MR. Mellers sets out to trace the relationship between society in England and the music evolved from its way of thinking since medieval times. This has been done before, of course, but nowhere by such an acute observer. One of the interests of this book is the author's diagnosis of the disease which set upon English music at the death of Purcell, and remained with it until the beginning of the English renaissance, about seventy years ago. Many writers, delighting in the obvious, have declared that the tidal waves of Handel-Mendelssohn oratorio swamped the English tradition. But none of them analysed the cause. Mr. Mellers does so brilliantly. Purcell, who knew how to treat the English language sensitively, did not live to found an operatic tradition. His followers frittered away their talents, and also failed in the operatic field. Thus the continuity of idiom, which in Italy, France, and Germany eventually gave symphonic music its social sanction, was severed prematurely in England, and the way was open for foreign invasion.

Not long ago, a well-known music critic apparently overheard Benjamin Britten remark that 'the rot' started with one or other of the major eighteenth-century composers. In the section of his book which deals with the English renaissance, Mr. Mellers points out that Elgar assumed he had behind him a ripe symphonic tradition, and it was the measure of his genius that he was able to do so. The liberating influence of Vaughan Williams is commented upon: and the author shows how Benjamin Britten and Michael Tippett have cut out 'the rot' so far as England is concerned by picking up Purcellian fluid declamation where Purcell left off.

As a sane and balanced account of the English scene, this book should be read by everyone seriously interested in contemporary music. Mr. Mellers occasionally alternates between

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the colloquial and the professorially abstruse in the matter of style. But what he has to say is so important that we must forgive him his literary shortcomings.

MAURICE LINDSAY

ALEXANDER BLOK. *THE SPIRIT OF MUSIC*. Lindsay Drummond. 5s.

THE title of this book is misleading. It has practically nothing to do with music at all. By 'The Spirit of Music', Blok means what Christians call the 'Holy Spirit', more or less. He attributes the evils which beset Russia immediately before the Revolution to the absence of this spirit amongst the ordinary people, and to the perversion of it by the 'upper' classes. No doubt all very true.

The six addresses which make up the book were apparently delivered during the critical months of upheaval. To those unfamiliar with the much more coherent teachings of Jesus Christ, Blok's declarations may, perhaps, seem revealing. Others will regret that the energies of the translator were not spent on a selection of Blok's undoubtedly fine poetry.

Music-lovers who marvel at Russia's restrictive, political approach to the arts will find the seed of it in the third address, 'Art and Revolution.' This endeavours to link up Wagner with Soviet Communism, via the Manifestos of Marx and Engels, and heaps cheap sneers on the 'twittering ladies and indifferent civilians and officers' who tried to 'starve Wagner'. 'When Revolution begins to sound in the air, Wagner's art sounds as an answer,' screams Blok. One can recall another who more recently reiterated similar sentiments!

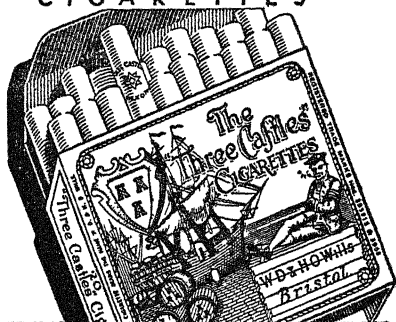
No, the greatness of Wagner's music (or indeed anyone else's) has nothing whatever to do with political theory. Until the Russians realize this truth, and renounce their vote of censure on Mozart, Beethoven, and the other 'composers of the upper classes', Russia will produce no more great music!

This collection cannot increase Blok's reputation, outside political circles. To redeem the damage, we must have his poems, competently translated, in the not too distant future.

MAURICE LINDSAY

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WITH good forthrightness, the authors comment at the start on 'the present very noticeable decline in æsthetic standards in this country', and their book will have achieved a not inconsiderable aim if it makes readers realize how much pleasanter for the eye, and less soporific for the mind, it is if they are surrounded in daily affairs by objects into the making and design of which some love has gone.

The ground has been covered before and, though with much the same limitations, perhaps rather more gaily, in the recent King Penguin book which was called on its cover *Popular English Art* and on its title-page *Popular Art in Britain*. The authors of the latest addition to 'Britain in Pictures' make the excuse which has come to be usual for authors in this series—lack of space. But for once they should be glad of what is inevitable—a certain scrappiness. It sorts well with their material and to survey in detail the whole range of English popular art would exhaust not the subject but the reader; the variety is so great, the branches are so loosely connected and the dividing line between art and craft is, apparently, indivisible.

Here, at any rate, a hard job has been well done and there can scarcely be a reader who will not enjoy at least dipping into this album which 'covers' valentines, broadsides, juvenile drama (rather too generously), pottery, barge- and fair-painting, pearlies, patchwork, tattooing, and toys. Once again, however, neither wax-flowers nor rug-making are included. Omissions there must be, but there seems a vendetta against these two, though one was so prevalent and the other is still in active practice.

LILIAN AINSWORTH

JUVENILE DRAMA. GEORGE SPEAIGHT. Foreword by SIR

RALPH RICHARDSON. Illustrated. Macdonald. 15s.

SLOWLY, interest in the sheets of juvenile drama has come to be recognized as something better than a cult of the quaint and rather more than a 'harmless' hobby. It is appreciated as a form of study of Regency and Victorian drama and has acquired the status of serious collecting, with all the appurte-

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nances of 'pirated' editions, rare and early plates, rival publishers, famous 'sets'. But until now, lovers of the juvenile drama have had only one book of reference—A. E. Wilson's *Penny Plain, Twopence Coloured*. That was published in 1932 and since then interest has increased and research deepened.

Mr. Speaight has always been in the forefront of those who kept alive the pasteboard plays—many will remember with gratitude his performances in Bumpus's old Marylebone Court House. None better than he to provide a new and erudite history of the English toy theatre, and his book does not disappoint. Avoiding all haphazardness, he begins by filling in the background, dramatic and domestic. Then he traces the fortunes of the various publishers and the fate of various collections, giving at the end appendices of plays and publishers with a fulness betokening fine care. At the same time, he never becomes academic in the sense of forgetting that the plays were meant to be performed—or at least, cut out. His book is accurate, annotated, and richly illustrated with no less than forty plates, of which fifteen are in colour.

Even those not as yet amateurs of the art will be astonished at how much there is in it, and it only remains to say that Mr. Speaight is now actively engaged in putting out Pollock theatres and publishing new versions of the old plays. Would it were not too much to hope that we might also have a modern theatre, wherein we might build up such recent masterpieces of production as, say, the Old Vic *Richard III*, Gielgud's *Love for Love*, and *The Skin of Our Teeth*. Meanwhile, here is this book and, as Sir Ralph says in his introduction, 'Why then, Reader . . . go to!'

H. K. FISHER

CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor "Life and Letters"

430 Strand, W.C. 2

SIR,

As I am engaged in writing the authorised biography of M. P. Shiel, I should be most grateful if any of your readers who possess any letters or reminiscences throwing light on the life of this Irish author would communicate with me.

JOHN GAWSWORTH,
at 1 Furnival Street, E.C. 4.